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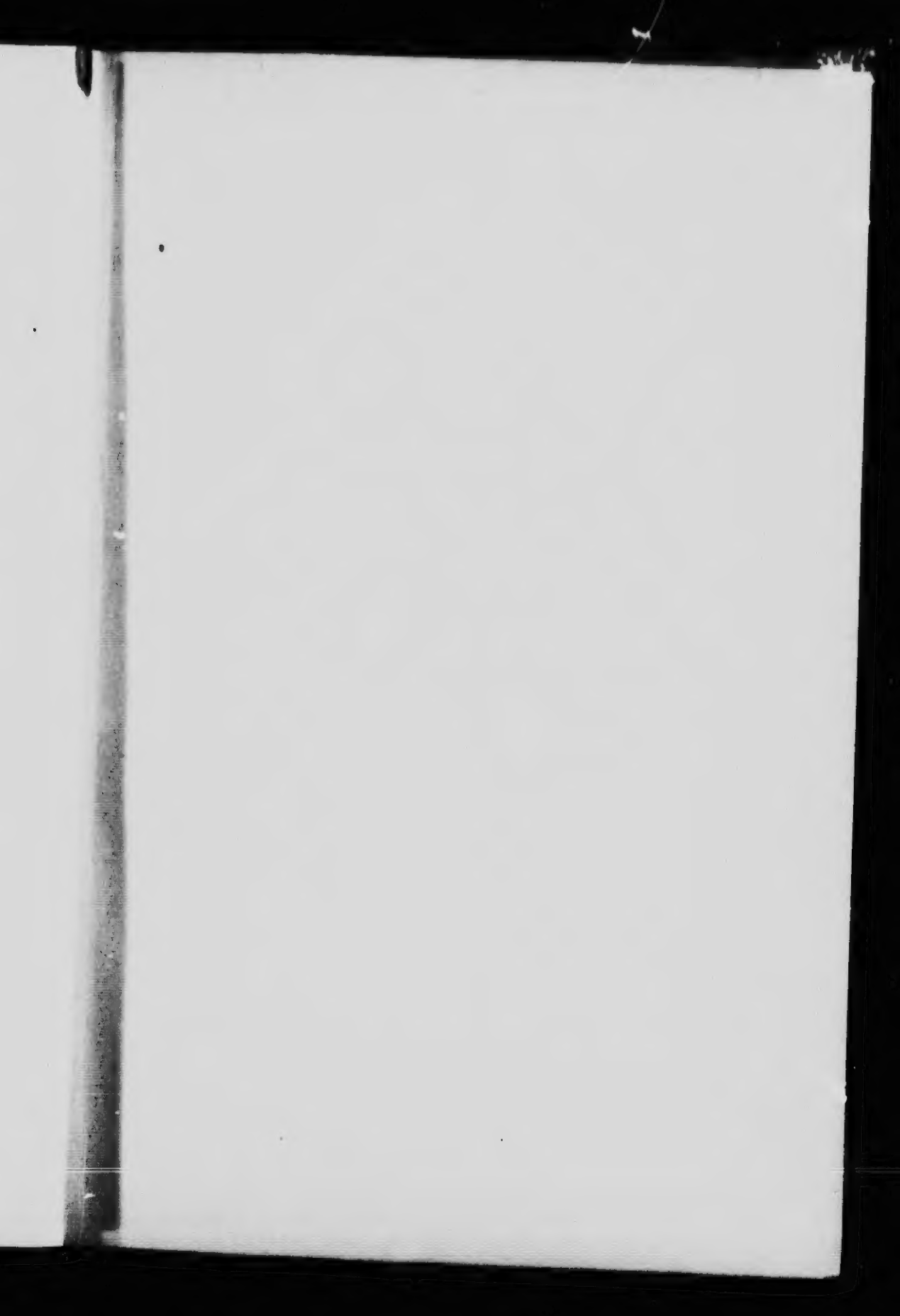
Uncle Arthur + Auntie Clara

Christmas 1917


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The Adventures of
Mrs. Wishing-to-be









The Adventures of Mrs. Wishing-to-be

And Other Stories

BY

ALICE CORKRAN

Author of "Down the Snow Stairs" "Margery Merton's Girlhood" &c.

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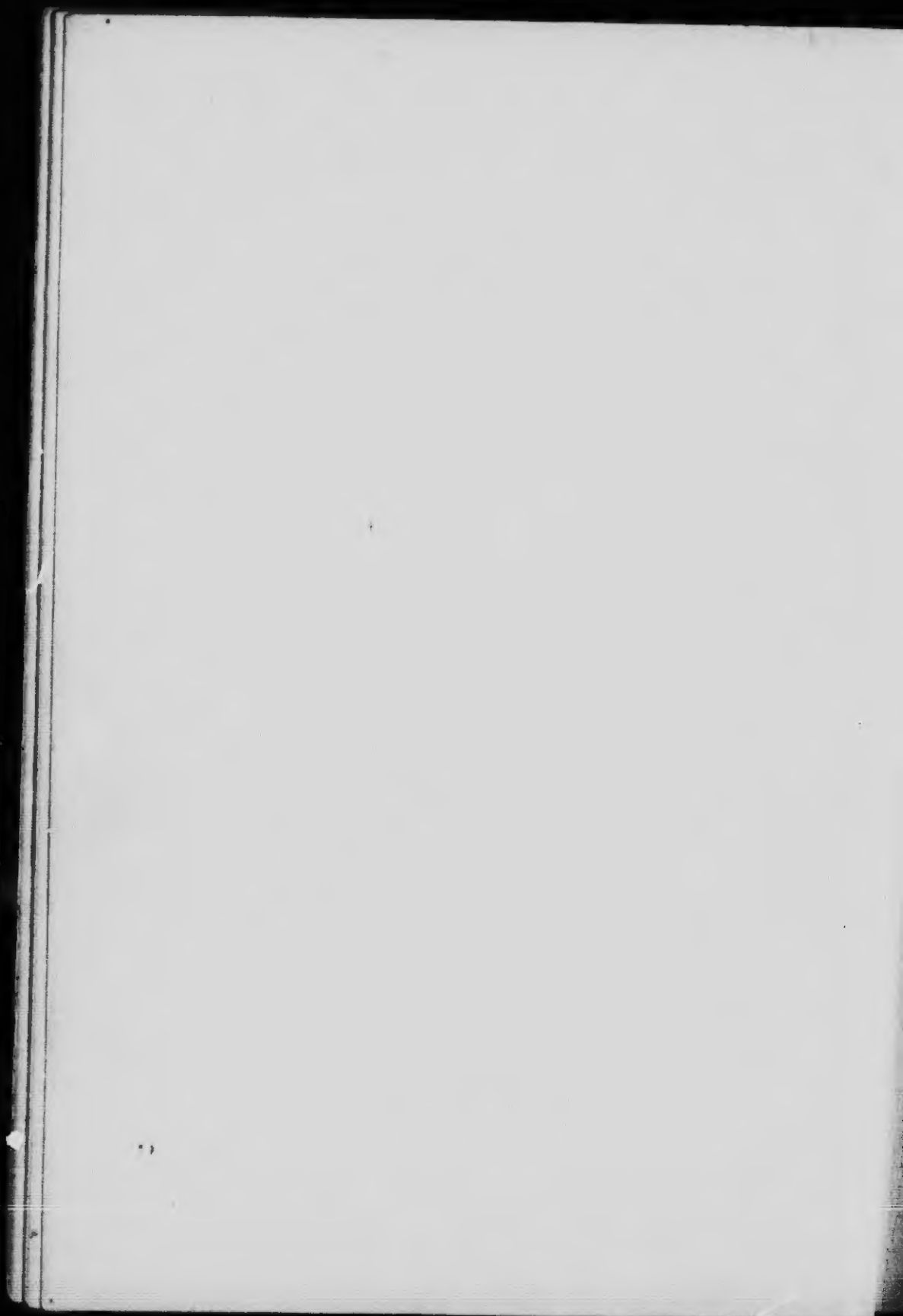
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*Printed in Scotland
by
Blackie & Son, Ltd.*

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THE ADVENTURES OF MRS. WISHING-TO-BE

CHAPTER I

HOW DODO CAME TO BE CALLED MRS. WISHING-TO-BE

DODO always said it was the fault of the Multiplication Table, but whether it was or not she never could quite make up her mind. At any rate it was the most extraordinary thing that ever happened to her. This little girl had no brothers or sisters to talk to. Therefore she had to keep many of her thoughts to herself, or only tell them to her cat, her dear old doll, and her picture-books. Her real name was Dorothea, but this was such a mouthful of a name that for the short of it she was called Dolly, then for the short of Dolly she was called Dodo. She lived with her father and mother in a house that had a great many cupboards and a great many corners. It was in the country; and I suppose it was because there were so many

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cupboards in the house that Dodo had three—two for her toys and one for her books. There never were cupboards kept so tidily as these were; one especially was wonderful to see. Nobody ever opened its door without Dodo's permission; but if she allowed you to have a peep, you saw shelves lined with gilt paper, and all sorts of toys upon them. On the shelf below was a village spread out, with curly-leaved trees going up in a point, and cottages with red roofs, Easter eggs, and animals of every description. Most of these had broken legs, but this did not in the least signify. Dodo liked them all the better for it. One doll with a smashed nose and tangled hair, and the paint on her lips and cheeks running in streaks, she loved beyond everything else, and carried about with her wherever she went, tucked under her arm. The other cupboard had no gilt paper ornamenting its shelves: but then the toys in it were much grander, not one was broken; and the finest of all was a new doll in a white muslin dress and wide blue sash, whom Dodo called "Miss Propiety." When Dodo had friends Miss Propiety was taken out and sat in state in the nursery, but she was so spick and span that Dodo felt she was altogether too grand a creature to play with every day. So soon as the little friends were gone Miss Propiety was put back into the cupboard, where she lay on her back with a handkerchief over her face.

Perhaps it was because she had no brothers and sisters to play with that her dear old toys and her dear old picture-books were so much to Dodo, and that she thought so much about them. She was always busy, and thinking of Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, and Robinson Crusoe, and wondering what had become of them after their story was finished. Dodo was always wishing to know all sorts of things. She would have liked to know everything without giving herself trouble. She had a great dislike of what she called trouble, that is, of sitting still and learning. If she saw a pigeon fly with the sunshine on its wings, she would say, "I wish I were that pigeon. Oh! what a fly I would take all over the world, and see all the countries, and the strange people! that would be *ever* so much better than learning geography. Or if she saw a bee going deep, deep into a flower, she would say, "I wish I were that bee. Oh! what a smell I would take, and I would find out everything about flowers! that would be a great deal better than botany lessons." And one summer evening she wished a very absurd thing. She went out with her father and mother in the pleasant twilight as a treat. It was harvest time, and the labourers were all out in the fields, and it seemed as if the moon rose up on purpose earlier to give them light to reap the ripe corn, for there it stood over the woods shining like a

gold plate in the sky. Dodo, looking at it, saw distinctly the face of the Man in the Moon. There were his plump cheeks, his little eyes, his nose, and his good-natured mouth. He seemed to be smiling steadily, as if he enjoyed very much looking down on the earth and seeing what was going on below. Dodo thought it must be very amusing to be up there seeing everything that was happening without any trouble. "Oh! I wish I were the Man in the Moon!" she said with a great sigh of wishing, which made her father, when he heard her, burst out laughing; it was so droll a wish to want to be the Man in the Moon. From that day he always called Dodo "Mrs. Wishing-to-be." "Good morning, Mrs. Wishing-to-be!" he would say to her every morning at breakfast, "what do you wish to be to-day?—a slate with a Multiplication Table all written over you?" "or the French grammar, with the irregular verbs all ready set down?" Her father made fun of her, but Dodo's mother felt sad that her little daughter should be always wishing to be something else than what she was. She thought as she looked at her bright blue eyes there was nothing so quaint and sweet as this little maid of hers, with her restless fancy, and she would get a foolish pain in her heart, as mothers are apt to have when they think their little ones can ever wish to go away from them. "Dear child," she would say, "there is nothing on earth that has

not some trouble. If you were a pigeon flying up, up ever so high, you might get shot; or if you were a bee sucking the flowers, you might get smothered some day; then you could not be my little daughter if you were anything but what you are. Do you not like to be my little daughter?"

"Indeed!—indeed, Mamma! I would not be anything else," Dodo would answer, hanging with a tight hug of her little arms round her mother's neck; "but still—still it would be very pleasant to know all sorts of things without dull learning, *learning*, LEARNING."

One day the extraordinary thing happened to Dodo. She was by herself before her cupboard. It was a wet day, and, as she had a little cold, she had been left at home while her Papa and Mamma went out to make a call. She sat among her picture-books, that lay all spread open around her. She had spread out her village, and looked at her toys, but her head ached a little, and she got tired of play. She began to wish that the pictures in her books would change, and the people on the paper get out, walk about, and not be always doing the same thing. Somebody pushed open the door behind her, and Pussy walked in and jumped upon her lap. How fat and warm Puss felt!

"Oh, Puss!" said Dodo, "I wish you were Puss in Boots. If you were you would not be

always standing with one paw up, as he is in that picture. There you are curling yourself up with a pur-ur-ur, singing like a lazy kettle going to sleep on the fire; I am going to tell you a secret. I won't tell anyone but you, for they laugh at me. I wish I had Beauty's mirror; of course you don't know what Beauty's mirror is, you silly know-nothing Puss; so you need not wink at me as if you did. Well, it was a present kind old Beast gave Beauty—such a useful present. I call it a real useful present; for you see every time she wanted to know anything she only had to look into this mirror and she saw it before her like a picture. If anyone had said to her, What is 3 times 7? she need not think or trouble, but only look into her glass, and there she would see quite distinctly—I don't remember what exactly, —15 or 19, at any rate something quite different from either seven or three. If some one had asked her, as Miss Jones asked me this morning, Why was King Alfred called the Great? she would have looked into her mirror and she would have seen King Alfred eating the cakes—I mean burning them—that is, I mean—I don't know what I mean. . . .”

“Of course you don't,” said a very curt voice. Dodo looked up with a start, and there to her surprise she saw that Puss had jumped off her lap, had taken out of the cupboard a pair of yellow boots that belonged to her doll, and was pulling

one on. "Of course you don't," he repeated, briskly pulling on the second; then he jumped on his hind legs, and looked the very image of Puss in Boots.

"Oh!" said Dodo. She was too surprised to utter another word, so she remained with her mouth wide open, looking at Puss.

"Come along with me; I'll get you the mirror," said Puss in that same gruff, quick voice.

"How—get me—the mirror?" said Dodo slowly.

"How!" repeated Puss snappishly; he certainly seemed in an irritable mood. "By asking Beauty for it, *of course*. How else could I get it?"

"I beg your pardon," said Dodo meekly. "But—you see—I thought Beauty was in a book. I did not know she was alive. I thought it was all a story, you know."

"Story!—story indeed!" cried Puss, his eyes very round, gray, and glistening. "Perhaps I am a story too, and Cinderella, and Goody Two Shoes, and Blue Beard, and all of us. That we are not alive at all." He tossed his head and moustache disdainfully. "That we do not talk or walk or do anything now."

"I beg your pardon," said Dodo once more, quite humbly. "I did think you were all stories, and that when your stories were finished—well, you see, I thought—right—you did nothing more, you were finished too."

"You are like all girls, you know nothing," exclaimed Pussy, who was in such a state of vexation that he quite danced about the room in a rage.

Then all at once he stopped, grew quite polite, stretched out his paw, just as it appeared in the picture, and said:

"Come with me and take a walk
Through the wind and in the rain,
Then together we can talk,
And I'll lead you back again.

"People they have grown so wise
That they only care for books,
And the fairy folk despise
Who still live in hidden nooks.

"If you mind a little weather,
You had better stay at home;
As my paws are cased in leather,
'Tis no matter where I roam."

"I do not mind weather at all," said Dodo, jumping up. "I think it is fun going out in the rain."


"Come along, then," cried Puss, "I am going to that Wedding; but girls are always so unpunctual."

"What wedding?" asked Dodo.

"I never tell tales," answered Pussy, going off towards the door in a great hurry.

CHAPTER II.

DODO MEETS THREE PEOPLE WHO HAVE EACH LOST SOMETHING.

 DODO had not time to think what an absurd answer that was of Pussy's until they had both gone out through the hall-door, and were making their way over the pebbles and the puddles. It was astonishing now to see how he skipped along, without getting so much as a splash upon his boots. He took no notice of Dodo, but as he went she could hear him mutter:

"People they have grown so wise
That they only care for books."

Suddenly he paused; then turned right round in another direction. "There she is again!" he exclaimed. "If you begin to talk to that horrid, dismal, old woman, she will puzzle you a great deal more than the Multiplication Table." Saying this Pussy hurried off and disappeared behind a hedge. Dodo was following as quickly as she could when she perceived an extraordinary figure coming towards her. It was that of an old woman whose petticoats were so short that they only reached down to her knees, showing her garters and a pair of lean legs. She shook, and

16 THE OLD WOMAN WHO WAS NOT HERSELF.

she shivered, and wagged her head in such a doleful fashion that her bonnet kept going first on the one side then on the other.

"Can you tell me who I am?" she said to Dodo in a very cracked voice.

"Why, no, of course I cannot," answered Dodo, throwing back her head with a jerk, as she always did when she found anyone asking her a silly question.

The old woman heaved a sigh, and looked down into a puddle at the reflection of her wrinkled face, her wisps of gray hair, and her battered bonnet. "It is not I," she said sadly. That is all I know. I grow older and older, and colder and colder, still I cannot find out, and nobody can tell me, what has become of me."

"Why don't you go home and put on another dress?" asked Dodo, shortly.

"Go home!" cried the old woman, wringing her hands. How can I have a house, or a dog, or a husband, or children, or anything, if I am not I?"

She looked at Dodo with sad eyes, shaking her poor old head and shivering as if her knees were growing colder still. Then she walked slowly on, and Dodo followed, feeling her thoughts all in a muddle. "If you were not you, who would you be?" asked the old woman.

"I! I would not be anybody else on *any* account," cried Dodo. "Yes, Pussy was right, you *are* worse than the Multiplication Table."

"Can I be the Multiplication Table?" said the old woman, putting her finger to her forehead. She shook her head more and more miserably. "I do not know if I am alive at all."

"You are alive," said Dodo politely.

"If I am not I, how can I know? I don't know if you are me or if I am you. I don't know if you are alive."

"Of course I am alive," answered Dodo indignantly.

"There," said the old woman, pointing to a little girl who was hanging what at that distance looked like stockings on a tree; "there she is minding her tails—tails—tails—what do trifles like tails signify?"

Dodo wondered who that little girl could be. She thought she had seen her before. She was very pretty. Her skirt was full of flowers, and a crook lay on the grass beside her. She did not look round till the old woman said in her cracked voice, "Bo Peep, have you found out who I am?"

"Bo Peep!" cried Dodo rubbing her eyes.

Bo Peep started, then burst out laughing. She had the prettiest dimples when she laughed.

"You are the old woman who went crazy because her dog barked at her one day when she came home with her petticoats cut all round about. Come, cheer up, whip your dog, and get ready for the Wedding."

"Wedding!" groaned the old woman. "Ah! how can I go to the Wedding, when I don't know if it is I who am asked."

"Well, she is a dismal old thing," said Dodo, almost inclined to cry, looking after the old woman, now toddling down the lane, taking the first road that came, in a spiritless fashion, as if, not knowing who she was, it did not signify which way she went.

Bo Peep had returned to her tails, and was settling them very tidily, the curly ones in a row, with the furry long ones just above them, the fat ones together, and the lean, lanky ones by themselves. "Are you always settling these tails?" asked Dodo.

"Tails are such troublesome things," said Bo Peep; they are always getting out of order. If I leave them just to take a little turn in the sun, or if I fall asleep, they get all in a jumble; the fat mingle up with the lean, and the curly ones with the lank ones."

"But why are you so *very* particular?" asked Dodo.

"You don't understand. You are not a shepherdess," answered Bo Peep, crossly. "Every day I expect my sheep back—the other day I thought I heard quite plain the comfortable ba-a of the mammy sheep, and the dear, peevish ba-a of the lambs answering—but it was a dream, all a dream—yet I am sure they will come

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back," she went on, wiping her eyes, and beginning to settle the tails again—perhaps to-day on account of that wedding. They will come back as I trained them, the fat together, the lean together—the mothers with the lambs—then, you know, when they see their tails hanging they will jump up and fasten them on, and if the tails were not in order the fat ones might put on the lambs' tails and the lambs their dams' tails; that would be absurd, you know, especially at a wedding."

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"It would," said Dodo, "just as if everybody put on everybody else's hat—the mother wear baby's hood—the fathers their little boys'."

"I do not see any likeness; tails are ever so much more important than hats," said Bo Peep, shortly.

Dodo began to think she was wasting her time. She had set out to find Beauty's mirror, now she had lost Pussy, and the old woman's talk had driven Beauty out of her head.

"Bo Peep," she said, "can you tell me where Beauty live Beauty who married Beast—I want particularly to know?"

But Bo Peep was just then clasping and unclasping her hands, and wringing them in great trouble—looking here and there in the grass—behind the trees and under the hedges. "Oh, my Bellwether's tail—my Bellwether's tail is gone! Oh! oh! oh! If it is not there, no sheep will put on its tail. Oh! oh! oh!"

Dodo started off to help her to look for the important tail. It was nowhere to be seen. "Perhaps it is in the meadow," cried Bo Peep, taking up her crook and setting off at a run. Dodo was left all alone. Where was she to go? She looked up and down the road for Puss, but she could only see the figure of the old woman going down the lane, and Bo Peep speeding away. Down the road, however, something was coming. It was a fine yellow coach drawn by six gray horses—a fat coachman with immense whiskers and a cocked hat sat on the box, and two thin footmen stood up behind. Whose coach could it be? "Perhaps," thought Dodo, "it is Beauty's coach."

She ran up the road, and inside the coach she saw a very pretty lady, wearing a white dress, a beautiful pearl necklace, and a bright brooch. She had shining shoes, how they sparkled! They rested on a red cushion, and when the sun shone on them they looked quite pink. By her side sat a gentleman in a red coat. He had nice rosy cheeks, and delightful blue eyes with long lashes. He had a bag full of comfits in his hand, and every time she opened her mouth he dropped a white almond into it. This was the way they talked—between whiles he drew out of his pocket, and threw into the lovely lady's lap, diamonds, rubies, and other precious stones, as beautiful as soap-bubbles, and the lady laughed

with glee as she buried her hands in the jewels, and lifting them out let them trickle down through her fingers like drops of water. Dodo watched all this by the road side. Could that pretty lady be Beauty? The lady catching sight of her stopped the coach.

"Please," said Dodo, coming up, and going straight to the point at once, "are you Beauty, who married Beast, to whom he gave the fairy mirror?"

"No," answered the lady, "I am not Princess Beast, but if you want to see her jump into my carriage. I am driving to her palace now, to take her to this terrible Wedding."

Dodo did not wait to be asked twice. She opened the coach door, and jumped in before the thin footman had time to descend from his post behind. "Oh!" cried the lady in a fright, "take care, do not jolt me, you do not know what a terrible thing would happen if I were to lose one of my slippers."

The lady's shoes shone as Dodo had never seen anything shine before. There was no mistake, they were made of glass.

"I think you must be Cinderella," she was just going to say, when, alas! the coachman whipped his horses, the carriage gave a lurch, and, with a jerk, up went one little foot from the cushion, and out flew a slipper through the window. Then, indeed, a terrible thing happened, for the coach that

moment turned into a pumpkin, the horses became mice, the coachman and the footmen rats, the prince disappeared, and Dodo saw Cinderella running down the road. How fast she ran! like a little frightened hare. Her shining satin dress and jewels were gone. She was all in rags covered with soot.

"Ah! poor Cinderella, what will become of her?" cried Dodo, setting off at a run. She followed the light, small figure in its mean and fluttering dress, till they came to a house, which they entered, and down into a kitchen. There were black beetles crawling about, and rats peeped from the corner with beady eyes. There was a dreadful smell of cinders and potato skins burning. Dodo shivered as she saw the rats, and she jumped up on a chair, holding up her petticoats to get out of the black beetles' way. She thought Cinderella looked so pretty with her pale sweet face in that dingy kitchen that she must remain to see what became of her. Cinderella had seized the broom and was sweeping the hearth. How hard she worked, trying to keep off the rats and beetles as she swept! The hot ashes fell on her fingers and burned them, and all the time she sobbed, saying, "Oh! my dear, dear glass slipper. If I could only find you all would come right!" Dodo from her chair, hearing this, kept looking about to see if she could discover a sign of the glass slipper. She ducked her head


down, she looked round, here, there, and everywhere, but nothing could she see, only the rats watching with their black beady eyes, and the beetles crawling slowly about, while gentle Cinderella worked and swept. Sweep as hard as she could she could not get the hearth clean; the ashes kept falling—falling. Suddenly Dodo heard a footstep outside coming nearer and nearer. Cinderella heard it also, for her sobs grew more bitter. "It is my stepmother coming," she cried; "oh! if I could only find my slipper!"

The door opened and the stepmother entered. She wore a night-cap. She had frowning eyebrows, and a nose like a beak; in her hand she carried a birch. "Is the hearth clean?" she said, lifting the rod over Cinderella. "Oh! you lazy cinder-wench. I shall make your shoulders tingle."

That moment Dodo saw a glimmer, something was sparkling in the cinders, she sprang down from her chair—forgetting the rats and the beetles. They may run over her petticoats, but she will save Cinderella. She put her hand into the ashes, she drew the shining thing out. It was the fairy slipper!—the beautiful, blessed fairy slipper! The stepmother made a dash to pull it out of her hand, but Dodo saved it, and Cinderella seized it. She put up her little foot, and slipped it into the shoe. As she slipped it on, a light filled the kitchen, then there was a hubbub and confusion, and Dodo could not tell exactly what happened.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE WOOD.

 *T* is most extraordinary and peculiar," said Dodo, who, without any jolt or start, now found herself sitting by the side of a pool, over which lay patches of duckweed, like any number of green plates upon it. A quantity of frogs were making a hubbub. "Croak, croak, croak," they repeated. They seemed very busy. When she looked close she saw they were putting on their opera-hats and brushing their tails. When one frog had put on his hat, and given his tail a brush, he would turn himself round and round, as if for his companions to judge the effect; then he would look at himself in the water, and there would be a chorus of croaks, as if some were saying, "That will do;" others, "Give another touch to your tail." As they adorned themselves the frogs croakily hummed:

Frogs and toads come out to sing,
The bride, the cake, and wedding-ring,
Come, then, to take the minstrel's part
With only a hat to make you smart.

"Again that Wedding, I declare!" muttered Dodo. Just then the fattest frog jumped upon

a patch of duck-weed close to the edge of the pool, and fixed his goggle eyes upon her without a wink. "Of course you are going to the Wedding?" he remarked.

"Certainly not," said Dodo; "I consider weddings foolish things."

"We make it a point to go to every wedding," said the frog sadly.

"You must have plenty to do, then, for people are always getting married," replied Dodo, putting her chin out rather contemptuously. "I am going to do something much more important; I am going to see Beauty, who married Beast. Can you tell me the way to her palace?"

"We go to croak at weddings," said the frog, not minding her question.

"That must be very dismal," answered Dodo.

"It is so pleasant to be dismal—don't you like being dismal?" said the frog, with another sigh.

"Not at all," cried Dodo with energy. "I never am dismal except on Multiplication Table mornings; and if it rains when it ought to be fine in summer, you know; I don't mind rain in the winter."

"You do not know what is nice," said the frog.

Croak, croak, croak,
In the mud and dirt;
Croak, croak, croak,
Put on my Sunday shirt,

Put on my golden specs,
Give me my diamond rings;
Goggle and croak and pant,
And think of many things.

"Well, that is dismal! I think it is the way you say it though makes it sound dismal—like a sermon, you know." Then she added, after a pause, "Will you tell me the way to Prince Beast's palace? I want particularly to know." Froggie sat on the duck-weed and took no more notice of her. He continued feebly croaking his song, and now and then giving a sob that sounded just like soap-suds going up a straw to make soap-bubbles. Dodo waited, hoping he would answer her. As she was giving it up he jerked out mournfully, "Go down that wood if you want to see something beautifully dismal."

"Beautifully dismal!" exclaimed Dodo. "Can a thing be beautifully dismal? You might as well say funnily sad, or miserably merry.

"Beautifully dismal," repeated the frog.

"He does not know what dismal means," said Dodo to herself, turning her back on froggie, and going towards a wood that was close by.

It was a great wood; it seemed to stretch miles and miles away. "Beast's palace was in a wood," thought Dodo. The more she looked into the forest the more she felt sure there was something in it she would like to see. She was a little frightened, for it seemed so still—trees, trees, trees every-

where, with only a tiny pathway going in and out. Still, as she looked, she felt surer and surer it was like the wood in which Prince Beast's palace stood. She went in. "I am sure to find my way back," she said to herself. "I shall remember these two tall bare trees with only a few leaves on their top branches. They are like people standing up with no clothes on—only their hats. Then a little way in there is the tree with the roots twisted round and round, like a crocodile watching with his tail over his head." Dodo walked on as she noticed all these things; presently the tiny pathway stopped. It seemed to have been showing her the way, and she missed it. Now before her and on either side of her were nothing but trees, trees, trees—tall trees, broad trees, trees with knotted trunks, and branches that seemed like arms and fingers stretched out to catch her. The roots spread under the dead leaves and ferns that tripped her up. Oh, how silent it was in the wood! Yet there was a sound like a dreadful, low, mocking laugh, as the leaves of the trees stirred against each other. An owl blinked his yellow eyes at her from a hollow trunk, and ruffled his feathers angrily as she passed; a raven surveyed her from a low branch, and popped his head on one side as much as to say, "What business have you here?" a serpent glided through the fern; she saw his lurid, green, spotted body. "I shall

not go any further," said Dodo, stopping. She thought that she had not gone very far, but when she turned she saw the trees had closed the path behind her, and she could not discern the entrance to the wood or the two tall trees with the bare trunks, and whichever way she looked the forest spread darker and darker. She caught sight of a wild pig watching her behind a bush, with little snorts. Then she ran quickly away deeper still into the wood, and now she knew she was lost in it. She sat down and thought of her home, and her dear Mamma—would she never get back to her? She gave a choking sob; suddenly there was a twitter and fluttering of birds, and Dodo, looking up, saw she had come to such a pretty spot. It was placed right in the heart of the grim forest like a beautiful secret there.

Great bushes grew about, bearing juicy blackberries, that made her hand purple when she touched them; there were all sorts of wild flowers, and all about spread a lovely carpet of strawberry-leaves. She was sure, too, she heard the sound of little voices talking. She got on tiptoe; and what do you think she saw behind the bushes? She saw two pale, pretty little children picking the glossy blackberries. They had golden hair, that fell in ringlets down their backs. The little girl was dressed in white, and the boy wore a red velvet jacket; over their heads fluttered a robin-redbreast, that seemed to be watching

them, and every now and then the robin picked a leaf, and flew away to drop it on a mound of leaves, like a bed spread under the trees. Dodo looked; her fear left her, and soon she saw the strangest sight she had ever seen, for there came with a busy flutter of wings a troop of birds. The little girl held out her skirt with a laugh, and in it the birds dropped a shower of bread-crumbs, morsels of ripe fruit, of dainty cake; now and then letting fall into the boy's open mouth a tit-bit. When they had given all they had the robin sang several bright notes, as if thanking them for the care of the children, and telling them what more to bring; then away flew the birds, perhaps to gather more food for the little girl and boy, or, perhaps, to care for their own little ones.

"I am sure they are the Babes in the Wood," thought Dodo, still watching from behind the bushes, as the wee, pale children sat down chattering and laughing, to eat what the birds had brought. Dodo wished she could join them, share their picnic, play with them, and help them to pick the clusters of shining fruit. She was just gathering her skirt about her to push her way through the bush, when, what do you think she spied on the other side?—a great ugly man. He was dreadful to look at. He had a plaster on his left eye, and his arms were hairy, his nails long and dirty. He was scowling about,

looking here and there, under the hedges, and behind the trees. The eye that had no plaster was big and wicked enough to do duty for two cruel eyes. It was like a round yellow marble. His hair was red, and was all tangled over his forehead. In his hand he carried a shining knife. "See the Villain—the bad, wicked man is coming to kill you!" cried Dodo. The Babes, looking up, sprang to their feet. The boy took the girl's hand, and away they ran, the robin flying before them, to the bed of leaves under the trees, and together they tucked themselves under it as best they could. Dodo ran also, and hid close behind it, for she, too, was afraid of the Villain's yellow eye finding her out. She saw the baby-boy put his arm round his little sister. "Don't be frightened; I shall save you," he bravely whispered. They cuddled up close to each other, and remained so still—so still. Tramp, tramp, tramp, sounded the footstep of the Villain, coming nearer and nearer. Will he see them? Will he kill them with his big knife? Then came a chirp, a muffled, sad song; it was Robin singing his little dirge; and then the leaves began to fall, fall. Some fell upon Dodo. Their cool touch came on her forehead like drops of rain. It was Robin strewing the Babes over with strawberry-leaves, covering them till they were quite hidden away. Still the Villain is coming closer and closer, looking about him with his one eye. The Robin has


concealed them so well he cannot see them, but he guesses they are near, and he will kill them if he can, and he begins to stab the ground with his knife. The blade shines as it goes up and down, stabbing, stabbing the earth. He is quite close to the Babes now, and he lifts his knife just above the boy. It is coming down, when Dodo sees a little brown thing fly at the ruffian's face; it is the plucky, pitiful Robin, picking with all his might at the yellow eye. "Ho, ho!" roars the ruffian, striking out in the air with his hand; but the Robin evades him, and "twit, twit," peck, peck, he goes with all his might at the yellow eye. "Ho, ho, ho!" roars the ruffian, dropping his knife, and blindly running round the wood. The Robin flies faster than he can run; still he pecks at the one eye with his strong, sharp beak. Dodo runs after them. The brave, charitable Robin!—she must see what becomes of him. Down the wood the Villain goes roaring. Dodo is so eager to know what will happen to Robin that she does not perceive that they are in the gloomiest part of the wood, where the thick branches meet overhead, and the sun scarcely pierces through. Suddenly she stops quite short.

A light is shining in the dark forest; she sees it distinctly, some way off behind the trees. "Can it be? It *must* be Beast's palace," she says slowly to herself. "It was just like that; the windows with lights in them shining through the forest."

At the thought of being so near to Beauty and the mirror she forgot the Babes, the Villain, Robin even, and set off quickly towards the light; but when she came a little nearer she found she was mistaken. It was no palace, but the sunshine lying broadly over fields, gardens, and a cluster of houses. A little village was standing close to the border of the wood that stopped abruptly here; a small brown brook ran between the forest and the bright town; a plank of wood spanned it like a bridge.

CHAPTER IV.

JACK.

 SHALL I cross or shall I not?" Dodo pondered, with one foot on the plank, and one foot on the path that led to it. It looked very pleasant on the other side. There was a sunshiny meadow on which a cow was browsing; overlooking the meadow was a house with a red roof, green blinds, and a green door. The red roofs of other houses peeped through the green trees. She thought the place looked like her toy village grown big. "Perhaps the people who live there will tell me where Beauty's palace is." Saying this Dodo ran over the plank. Just as

she reached the other side she heard a loud sneeze; a voice said, "Bless you," a cow lowed, a dog barked, a cat mewed, and a rat squeaked.

"What a to-do for a sneeze!" thought Dodo getting on tip-toe and looking over the hedge. She saw a very fat woman, with a big double chin, spreading out some clothes, all tattered and torn, to dry in the sun, the cow browsing in the meadow had a crumpled horn, a dog with a rough coat stood on the doorstep, a black cat was following the woman about, while a rat perched on a malt bag was nibbling away at its contents. As Dodo watched, there came another sneeze. "Bless you," said the plump woman, the cow lowed, the dog barked, the cat mewed, the rat squeaked, and Dodo laughed. The fat woman looked towards her; she did not seem surprised to see her standing there. "Oh, dear! oh, dear!" she said, "we shall never get to that Wedding; my poor husband's cold will never be well in time. Then how could he go with *such* a red nose?" Dodo laughed at this, and the fat woman laughed till her body shook like a jelly shape on a dish when it is moved.

There came another sneeze, and then it all began just as before. The woman said, "Bless you," the cow lowed, the dog barked, the rat squeaked, and Dodo laughed.

"Are my clothes mended?" asked a very hoarse voice, and Dodo perceived through the open door

a bed, and on the pillow lay the head of man with a night-cap on, who had a very red nose. "That is my husband, and these are his clothes," said the woman, taking the bundle of rags on her arm. They went in, and Dodo sat down on a chair. "Mended!" repeated the fat wife, sitting down on the bed, and giving the old coat a shake after she had threaded her needle. "It is no use mending them; do what I will they are always tattered and torn—ever since we married. I mend, I patch, I darn, and I sew, but they only get more and more tattered. I suppose it is their nature to fall to bits."

"That is why I am always catching cold," said the man, dolefully. "But how can I go to the Wedding, and to such a wedding, all in rags, and always sneezing?" With this he gave a bigger sneeze than ever, which set the wife, the cow, the dog, the cat, the rat, and Dodo, blessing, lowing, barking, mewing, squeaking, laughing, as before.

"Did you ever see such a hole?" asked the fat woman, putting her whole arm through a tear.

"That is where my elbow shows," said the man, "and here my knees come out, and there in my stockings is where my big toe peeps through; well, I *am* the Man all Tattered and Torn."

"And I," echoed the fat woman sighing, "am all forlorn."

"What!" cried Dodo, jumping up, "you cannot be the Maiden all Forlorn? The plump woman

nodded, and began laughing again. "Well, you are changed, you *have* grown fat and merry," said Dodo. The Man all Tattered and Torn chuckled, gave another sneeze, and *Da Capo*, as the music-books have it, all went on as before.

"Of course you are going to the Wedding," said the fat woman when she had done laughing.

"Everybody is saying that to me," answered Dodo rather peevishly. "I don't care about the Wedding; what I *do* want to know, is the way to Beauty's palace—Beauty who married Beast; can you tell me that?"

"I cannot," answered the fat woman, shaking her head, "but Mr. Jack can—Mr. Jack knows everything."

"Who is Mr. Jack; where does he live?" said Dodo eagerly.

"Dear, dear, dear!" cried the fat woman, setting off a laughing again. Dodo thought she had never met anyone like this fat woman for laughing. "Not to know where Mr. Jack is, or where he lives! Dear, dear, dear! why, *there* to be sure."

Dodo followed the direction of her finger, and saw a larger house than the one she was in. It too, had a cosy red roof, bright green shutters, a green door, and a trim garden in front. She did not wait to say "good-bye" to the fat woman, or to the Man all Tattered and Torn, but set off at a run. "Who could this Mr. Jack be who knew everything?" she wondered. She soon stood be-

fore the green door, and gave a knock. "Come in," cried a brisk voice from within, and Dodo lifted the latch.

A dapper little gentleman, wearing a brown coat and gold buttons, sat before a table on which smoked two dishes, one of beans and the other of pudding. He ducked his head on one side to look at her. "Have some pudding?" he said, as if he knew her quite well.

"Thank you," answered Dodo, taking a chair.

As the dapper man went to fetch her a knife and fork she looked about the room. It was a very pleasant room; two arm-chairs that had a social look stood on each side of the crackling fire; pipes were on the mantel-piece, and over it was a smoking-cap with a smart tassel. There seemed to be no staircase in the house, but a ladder led up to a door above. What puzzled Dodo excessively, however, were the number of big things lying about. The face of the clock was like a huge Christmas cake, big enough to give indigestion to a whole school of children. There was a wisp of red hair hanging on a nail, as long and as thick as a Shetland pony's tail; a stick like a young tree reached from the floor to the ceiling, and a yellow bone like an elephant's tusk lay on a table by itself. What could Mr. Jack want with these big queer things? Just opposite to her also hung the portrait of a lady, with her face all awry, like the one we see when we look at

ourselves in a teapot. Whose could that portrait be?

"Now," said Jack, coming back very briskly—it was quite amazing how agile the natty fellow was—"have some hasty pudding." He stuck the spoon in the middle of the steaming dish and put a large slice on Dodo's plate. "That was my wife," said Jack, for Dodo was looking at the portrait; "she is dead, poor thing." He screwed up his face in a sad ball, all creases and punctures. "After I had rescued her from that brute of a giant who was dragging her by the hair she ran away with me and we were married. But she was in a fidget and a fright ever after. The least bit of a noise made her think of the giant. She was always starting up and crying, 'A giant, a giant!' One day she was eating hasty-pudding; there came a knock, she gave a start, the pudding went down the wrong way, she choked and died." Jack wiped his eye, Dodo laid down her knife and fork. "Are you Jack the Giant Killer?" she asked in a voice as solemn as when she was saying her lessons. Jack nodded, his mouth was too full of beans, he could not speak at that moment.

"Have some beans?" he said, in a stuffy tone, as soon as he could form a word. "They are splendid beans, and to think they all came from that wonderful bean-stalk. After I had cut it down with the giant in it, I gathered the beans. There are such heaps and heaps, enough to last me all my life."

"Are you Jack of the Bean Stalk, as well?" asked Dodo in a voice more slow and solemn than before. Jack nodded. "And Jack who built the house?" added Dodo, and this time she might have been preaching in a pulpit, she was so tremendously solemn.

"At your service," answered Jack with a broad smile, touching his forehead with the back of his hand in military salute. "You see," he went on, "what could I do? After I had killed the giants, I could not cross my arms and do nothing, so I set to and built houses. Come, now, I'll build you a house if you like."

"Thank you, Jack," said Dodo with alacrity.

"You will not want a big house?" said Jack again, ducking his head on one side as he looked at her; "a house like a Noah's ark, you know, with a red roof and a yellow front; you won't want a school-room?"

"No, certainly not," said Dodo.

"Just so," said Jack; "a room to play in with your friends, and a little kitchen to make cakes and jellies, and a bed-room above."

"And if you please, Jack, I don't want a staircase in it. I should *much* rather have a ladder—a ladder is so much greater fun," said Dodo.

Jack nodded as if it was all settled.

"Jack," asked Dodo, who was feeling quite at home, "what are all these big things?"

"Ha, ha, ha! can't you guess?" chuckled Jack

"There now, that clock; what do you think that was before I had it?"

"Well," said Dodo reflectively, "I suppose it was one of those big clocks you see out of doors, like Big Ben, you know, up in a tower."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Jack. "It was a lubberly giant's watch; the watch he wore in his waistcoat pocket, and pulled in and out as easily as a lady draws hers. And this, now—what do you think *that* was?" he went on, putting his hand on the great yellow bone on the table.

"Well," said Dodo cautiously, "I know the elephant at the Zoological Gardens has a tusk just like that."

"It's a giant's eyetooth," cried Jack, bringing his fist heavily down upon it. "I saw the wretch stick it into the tender bodies of little children. That was his walking-stick," and Jack pointed to the sapling. "And what do you think *that* was?" he went on, taking down the coarse wisp of red hair.

"It looks like the tail of a horse," answered Dodo.

"Ha, ha!" roared Jack; "it was the villain's own hair, just a lock of it over his forehead; and look—that was his pocket-handkerchief," and he took out a piece of linen as big as a sheet.

"Oh!" exclaimed Dodo, and she could not say another word. Jack lit his pipe and sat down in his arm-chair with a pleased expression. Dodo looked at him with the greatest admiration. She

thought what a plucky, gallant little man he was; how kind, clever, and funny also. His eyes were so piercing, they looked as if they could see through one as easily as a ray of light through a chink. Then what between drawing up his eyebrows in a knot when he was thinking, puckering up his forehead and whistling to himself, his face was full of droll creases. The more Dodo looked at Jack the surer she felt he was just the one to help her to find Beauty's mirror. "Jack," she began in her most coaxing voice, "suppose there was something—something that would make you know everything," and she waved her spoon in a circle as if she was pointing to everything, "without any trouble, would you not try to get it?"

"Not I!" answered Jack, sending a great puff of smoke out of his pipe.

"No!" said Dodo, utterly dumbfounded, dropping her spoon.

"I would not give that," said Jack, snapping his fingers, "for what can be done without trouble—anyone could do it then. The fun of beating those lubberly giants was the planning, and the thinking, and the trouble of it."

"But you see," said Dodo in a small voice, "Jack, it would not be to help me to kill giants, or to build houses—only lessons—difficult, dull lessons." Jack puckered up his forehead. "Tut, tut!" he said, "lessons or giants, it is all the same,

no trouble, no credit, no fun." Then seeing Dodo looking so downcast, "Well what is it?" he asked good-naturedly. Dodo sat up and told him of Beauty's mirror, and how she would never have to learn lessons, and yet know everything, if she only could get that mirror. Jack listened, with a look on his face that seemed to show that he would not care much for the mirror. "Come with me to the Wedding, you can ask Beauty herself, then."

"Oh!" cried Dodo, "are you sure, Jack, she will be at the Wedding?"

"Sure? of course she will be at the Wedding, the most extraordinary, the most terrible Wedding that has taken place in fairyland."


"Don't you think, Jack, we ought to set off at once?" cried Dodo jumping up.

"Tut, tut, tut!" cried Jack; "what a hurry we are in! Come along, first, we must see that the village folk are ready to be off too."


He took down his hat from the peg, and Dodo set off with him.

CHAPTER V.

JACK'S VILLAGE.

ACK and Dodo walked down the village, and Dodo thought it was the prettiest place she had ever seen. All the houses had trim gardens in front, full of flowers and fruit. The flowers and fruit did not seem to mind the seasons in Jack's village, for they appeared to come as they liked. There were roses and snowdrops, strawberries and apples, all in full bloom together. The people in the place seemed very happy. There were old women going about with short petticoats, and long cloaks, and poked bonnets; and simple-looking youths with their mouths always wide open; old men with nice gray beards; and pretty girls with puffed sleeves and long trains to their dresses. Everybody wished good-day to Jack, who kept nodding all the time. "How clean the place is!" said Dodo, looking about her. "I never saw any place so clean."

Jack's village was certainly clean as clean could be; the steps in front of the houses sparkled in the sun; there was not a speck of dust on the roads. "Too clean by half," muttered Jack ruefully. "It is sweep, sweep, all day with the little



old woman and her broom; and when she is not sweeping the village she is sweeping the moon."

"The moon!" replied Dodo, looking up to see if Jack was laughing at her, but he was as serious as a schoolmaster at lessons.

"We shall step in here to see if Mrs. Goody and her pupils are getting ready for the Wedding," continued Jack, stopping at the door of the primest house in the place. It had a square roof, square windows, and a square door, over which was written "Mistress Goody Two Shoes' School." Hopping about the square beds in the garden was a glossy black raven; he flapped his wings when they entered, and screamed, "Do you know your Alphabet? Do you know your Alphabet?"

"Of course I know my Alphabet," Dodo replied indignantly; "and I know my Multiplication Table too—five times two is twenty-four, and four times three is forty-two."

"How clever you are!" said Jack admiringly. He could kill giants and build houses, but he evidently had not a notion of the Multiplication Table.

Goody Two Shoes' parlour was full of little girls, but none were talking; they all stood up and dropped a curtsy when Jack and Dodo entered. Goody Two Shoes, who was a bright-faced little lady wearing a very prim cap, was brushing the hair, and putting starched white dresses and blue sashes on those good little girls.

Those that were ready, sat with their feet and hands nicely crossed in front of them, and those who were not stood waiting to be dressed. How spick and span they all looked! Dodo thought they seemed all like repetitions of Miss Propriety, her grand doll, who only came out when visitors were expected in the nursery. Goody Two Shoes bade Jack and Dodo good-morning very politely, and told them she was putting white frocks on her pupils to go to the Wedding. "They must have white frocks on for the Wedding," she said; to which Jack agreed. Every time Goody Two Shoes, Jack, or Dodo spoke, all the little girls dropped a curtsy. Dodo felt rather shy; she wondered if the little girls could speak, or if they only knew how to curtsy. After a while she went up to one whose hair was not yet brushed, and who she thought did not look quite so good as the others; but when she stood before her the little girl dropped a curtsy at once, and then Dodo did not know what to say. At last she asked timidly, "Do you like to play?"

"When I am allowed, and between lessons," answered the little girl, dropping another curtsy. "I never talk in a loud voice. I never want to play except when I may. I always hold myself straight. I take my medicine without jam."

"Without making a face?" asked Dodo, surprised.

"Without making a face," replied the little girl.

"I would like to see you take it," said Dodo, poking her chin, and straightening her back. She turned away, for this little girl seemed too good to be talked to, and then Jack bade good-bye to Mistress Goody Two Shoes, and all the good little girls curtsied as Jack and Dodo went out.

"How good they are!" said Dodo dolefully.

"Very good," answered Jack, dolefully too.

"Do they always curtsy?" asked Dodo with a sigh.

"Always," said Jack with another.

"Are all the little girls good in the village?" asked Dodo.

"No; there is Red Riding Hood, she is not good; Mistress Goody says she is quite a handful. I am going to see her, to tell her to curl her hair, and take off her red hood and put on a white dress for the Wedding." They had come to a house that was red like strawberry-jam. It had a red roof, a red door, red blinds to the windows, and a red rose climbed over the wall. Jack knocked, and the door was opened by a little girl with bright eyes, and a crimson hood tied under her rosy chin.

"Red Riding Hood," said Jack, shaking his head, "why will you not put on a white frock and blue sash to go to the Wedding, like all the good little girls in the village?"

"Oh, Mr. Jack!" she answered, the tears coming into her eyes, "do not ask me to go without my hood. I should lose my name if I went without it."

If Jack did not know the Multiplication Table, although he could build houses and kill giants in such a masterly fashion, there was another thing he could not do: he could not bear to see a little girl cry. Still he felt that Red Riding Hood deserved a scolding, and he did his best to give her

"Red Riding Hood, I fear you will get into trouble; you are too fond of play, too fond of plucking flowers all day long. If it is a fine day, and the flowers look bright, you run away to pluck them, and forget all about your lessons. The young huntsman who killed the wolf which was going to eat you up asks you to marry him, and you say, 'Thank you kindly, I will.' The wedding-day comes, and you are out picking flowers, and have forgotten all about your promise. Remember the Wolf, Red Riding Hood; remember the Wolf!"

"Please Mr. Jack," said Red Riding Hood, "I shall marry when I am quite old and grown up, and I shall learn my lessons and go to school when it is winter and there are no more flowers, and I shall never talk to a wolf again." She gave a little sob, for Jack had spoken as if he were really vexed; so he patted her head.

"Don't cry. I shall tell Mrs. Goody Two Shoes you are to wear the hood. Come, dry your eyes; here is a new friend, for whom I am going to build a house."

Red Riding Hood dried her eyes and smiled.

"Be my neighbour," she said to Dodo, putting her hand into hers. "Come with me now to the funeral of Mother Hubbard's dog."

"Ugh!" exclaimed Jack, "I had forgotten the funny fellow was dead, and still I fancy it is but one of his pranks."

"Indeed!" said Red Riding Hood, "he is really dead this time; I saw him, quite stiff and stark, put into his coffin, and all the dogs are mourning for him."

They went down the village together, Dodo and Red Riding Hood hand-in-hand. There was something in the touch of Red Riding Hood's hand that seemed to make Dodo merrier than she had ever been, as if she would dance and sing as she went along. The wind seemed to get into her heels, and the sunshine into her head. As they were going, however, to Doggie Hubbard's funeral, she had to walk demurely, and as they went she told Red Riding Hood of Beauty's mirror, and promised to bring it to the house Jack would build. Red Riding Hood skipped about with joy; it was just what she would like also—to know all her lessons without giving herself a scrap of trouble. Dodo thought Red Riding Hood was the most delightful little girl she had met in all her life, and that to have a home in Jack-land was much better than having a cupboard full of toys. Once she knew her way to the village from her

home, she would come to it every day to learn her lessons by looking into the mirror, and to play with Red Riding Hood.

All the dogs of the place were walking towards the churchyard—two and two; their tails tied up with a large knot of black ribbon, and a collar of crape round their necks. As they went they raised their heads every now and then and gave a loud howl. Presently the funeral came in sight; there was the coffin, borne by four black dogs. Behind it came Mother Hubbard, in a pointed black hat and long black cloak, crying bitterly. All the dogs now went behind, and, lifting their voices, uttered a dismal "Bow-wow-wow!" A great many inhabitants of Jack-land also joined the procession. Soon they came to where the hole was dug; a large brown owl stood by it with a shovel in his paw, and yellow blinking eyes. At this sight the dogs once more lifted their heads and gave another miserable howl. Mother Hubbard wrung her hands and sobbed. The four black dogs who carried the coffin brought it to the edge of the hole and gently, gently lowered it in. Mother Hubbard wept; the dogs howled; everybody said, "Alack, alack! the comical little fellow is dead."

Suddenly a muffled "Bow-wow-wow!" was heard. Everyone listened. Where did it come from? "Bow-wow-wow!" again. It certainly came from the coffin. "He is not dead," cried

Jack; "He is not dead," repeated everyone. The owl with his shovel broke open the coffin; and up jumped Doggie, barking with all his might, his tail wagging, an expression on his face exactly as if he were laughing. The dogs that had come to mourn, feeling how foolish they looked, with their black cravats and crape tail-knots, gave a loud, angry growl, and, turning their backs, they scampered away. Everybody followed feeling just as foolish, only Mother Hubbard laughed, and patted her favourite, and Jack remained behind to lecture him.

Dodo and Red Riding Hood set off together, for Red Riding Hood was going home to put on a new crimson hood for the Wedding. Right in her path Dodo saw something that she fancied was a daisy. She stooped to pick it up, for she feared it would be trampled on. When bending down she found it was not a daisy, but a funny little man with a wizened face. He held his cocked hat in his hand, and was smiling and bowing; his coat-tails were flying; a bodkin was in his belt for a sword. He jumped upon Dodo's finger, and felt as light as a little bird perching there. "Good-morning, fair ladies!" he said in a squeaking voice, that sounded a long way off; "I shall be your Sir Knight. I will ride by your side on my mouse, and slay your enemies with my bodkin."

"You silly manikin," said Red Riding Hood
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with her bright laugh, that sounded as if the sunshine had taken a voice to itself. "If a wolf came he would eat you and your mouse up in a gobble."

"Is he Tom Thumb?" asked Dodo.

"General Sir Thomas Thumb at your service," answered the wee manikin in his thin voice. "He is my favourite toy," said Red Riding Hood. "Toy!" repeated Tom Thumb in a squeaking grumble; "you might as well call me a baby! Could a toy do this?" he cried, jumping upon a thistle that was close by, and twirling his sword above his head, he began walking up and down a thistle leaf with a very soldierly bearing. "Could a toy do this?" he went on, putting his arms akimbo, and beginning to dance. He twirled on his toes, jumped about in a stately manner, paused to take off his cocked hat, and made a bow. Then, beginning again, he spun about so fast that Dodo could not tell which was his hat, his coat, or his sword. As he was dancing his quickest there came buzzing a great brown wasp. It bore down upon Tom and clasped him. "Buzz, buzz!" went the wasp; "Squeak, squeak!" went Tom. The wasp had his sting out to pierce him through and through, but Dodo seized it by the body and Tom was saved. The wasp, however, was not going to let himself be done out of his sting, and sent it through Dodo's finger.

"Oh, dear!" she cried, shaking her hand in the air and dancing about with pain, while Red Riding Hood caught up Tom and set him down sitting in a buttercup. "Good-bye!" she said, giving him a friendly pinch with the tips of her fingers. "All your troubles come because you will never remember how small you are."

Tom Thumb looked so funny with his eyes round and glaring with indignation, and his mouth wide open, that Dodo forgot her pain and burst out laughing.

"Good-bye!" repeated Red Riding Hood. "I am going home to put on a new hood for the Wedding."

"Quite right," said a gruff voice behind them, and, looking round, Dodo and Red Riding Hood saw a grand-looking gentleman.

CHAPTER VI

DODO MEETS A POLITE GENTLEMAN.



E certainly was a grand-looking gentleman, with a red coat and fur collar like a general's. In his hand, which was covered with a hairy glove, he held a gold-headed stick. His face was almost hidden; there was only

the point of a long nose that could be seen, for he had a gray hat well drawn over his eyes, and a shirt collar going up so high, that it hid his mouth and chin. His manners were very polite, but he kept turning his head aside, so that it was not very easy for Dodo to see even the tip of his nose. "And why do you want to go to the Wedding?" asked this grand-looking gentleman. "Such bright, beautiful little girls ought not to waste their time seeing other people married. They ought to be out among the flowers—why, you dear children, you are like flowers yourselves; this little girl with the red hood is like a poppy that has left its field of corn for a run on its own account. Come, my children, and take a little walk with me."

Dodo had never heard anyone say such pretty things; but her heart was set on going to this Wedding, in order to meet Beauty and get the mirror, so she pulled Red Riding Hood by the skirt and nodded to her to come away. Red Riding Hood, however, seemed to like the gentleman who spoke so politely, although he had a hoarse voice, and kept turning his head aside, as if he did not like to be looked at. She put her hand on his outstretched hairy glove; "Thank you kindly, sir," she said, hesitating, "but I think I had better not go, for, you see, one summer day just like this one I was nearly eaten up by a wolf."

"How dreadful! Ah! you must have gone out

alone," said the stranger, shaking his head; "now I shall be with you to protect you. Come, you will be quite safe. I know a lane close by where the buttercups are like gold goblets, and the daisies like shields made of silver; and the bluebells, and the butterflies—oh! the bluebells and the butterflies!" he repeated.

"I must see them. I must pluck them," cried Red Riding Hood, going a few steps.

"Jack said you never think of anything but plucking flowers," remarked Dodo severely.

"It will only be quite a little way," said the stranger, coaxingly, not letting go his hold of Red Riding Hood's hand.

The village was so near there could be no danger to walk a little way. Dodo looked up at the gray hat, the big collar, and the tip of the long nose just peeping over it.

"What is your name?" she asked.

"I am a general," replied the stranger, flourishing his gold-headed stick over his head; "I have fought a great many battles, and won them all; every one is afraid of me."

"Oh!" cried Red Riding Hood, catching her breath with admiration.

"What is your name?" repeated Dodo shortly.

"I am General Puss in Boots."

Dodo looked at the stranger's feet; he wore high boots that went up to his knees. She noticed that his legs were long and thin. "You are not

Puss in Boots," she said bluntly, "I know Puss in Boots, he came out with me to-day, he does not wear a hat and collar that hide his face, and his voice is not a bit gruff, his legs are fat and furry, not lank ones like yours."

The stranger gave a cough to conceal his feelings, but he did not let go Red Riding Hood's hand although she tried to pull it away; after a minute he began to laugh. "My dear child, how clever you are!" he said to Dodo, evidently trying to soften his voice. "Who could have thought a little girl could be so pretty and so clever together; no, you are quite right, I am not Puss in Boots, but I am a great friend of his, which comes to the same thing. Walk with me and I shall tell you wonderful stories of our adventures together; when we are all three resting under a tree, you shall find out who I am." At those last words his voice became hoarser.

Dodo did not like to leave Red Riding Hood alone with the stranger, who still held her hand, and whom she seemed to admire. She had taken a strong dislike to the grand gentleman who had told a fib in saying he was Puss in Boots. "Look, my children," said the stranger; "here is the lane. Did you ever see such pretty flowers?"

The lane led to the entrance of a wood. Red Riding Hood gave a scream of delight, nor had Dodo ever seen anything so bright and lovely as the flowers that grew there. They grew in such

profusion that she could scarcely see the grass for the blue, the pink, the yellow clusters. Two white butterflies were flapping their wings, and looking in the sunlight like a pair of twinkling stars dropped from the sky, and taking a holiday on the flowering lanes of the earth. "Oh! the darlings," cried Red Riding Hood, clapping her hands, and dashing into the wood that led away from Jack's village; she was soon knee-deep in the blossoms, gathering them up by handfuls, and taking up her skirt she filled it with the flowers. Dodo also had forgotten her fright at the sight of the brilliant blossoms. The stranger kept by their side, and said all sorts of pleasant things to one and the other. He would tell them when they picked a particularly beautiful cluster that they were the prettiest flowers of all, or that their eyes were bluer than the bluebells, that the wild rose was nothing to the colour of their cheeks, and that the honeysuckle reminded him of their deft waxen fingers. Red Riding Hood smiled and blushed, and said, "she had never met anyone so kind in all her life." Dodo thought the speaker silly, but she liked the flowers, and there seemed to be always blossoms more lovely than the rest, tempting her on and on. Once, as she was plucking a cluster of white and golden-eyed daisies, she caught sight of the stranger's glittering eyes under his hat. "What green eyes you have!" she said, pausing.

"The better to see your own pretty blue eyes," he replied.

Dodo was not at all mollified by the polite answer; she called to Red Riding Hood to return; but Red Riding Hood had plunged deeper into the wood, gathering the flowers that seemed always to be growing more and more exquisite. Dodo thought she would return without her; but just then she caught sight of an elder-bush, with round white blossoms like baby moons hiding in the shady leaves. She felt she must have one spray for her nosegay, but the stalk was so high she could not break the sprig. The kind stranger came to her help, and bit it off with his teeth. "What strong teeth you have!" said Dodo.

"The better to nip the pretty blossoms," answered the stranger. As he said this his green eyes glistened so oddly that Dodo felt frightened again. She glanced towards the village, and now she perceived that they had gone so far she could not see one roof of its houses. "Red Riding Hood, Red Riding Hood, I shall go home without you if you do not come," she cried; and Red Riding Hood hearing her call came hurrying back.

"Good-bye, sir," she said dropping a curtsy.

"No!" growled the stranger, in a voice that did not try to be gentle now, but was gruff and fierce, "you shall not go. I have not told you who I

am;" and saying this he put a hand on the little girl's shoulder.

"I do not want to know who you are," replied Dodo sturdily, but her heart was beating with fright as she tried to shake off the stranger's heavy grasp.

"Please, sir," said Red Riding Hood, looking very pale and letting all her flowers fall, "if you would walk home with us you would tell us as we go along."

"No," answered the stranger, and his voice sounded almost like a roar; "I will tell it to you there under the shade of yonder tree. It will be so pleasant to sit there with two chubby, plump, tender little girls, away from the houses. It is quite a place for a picnic." Saying this he put out his tongue and licked his jaws. Throwing back his head to laugh his hat fell off, and Dodo saw quite plainly his pointed ears, his cruel eyes, his big teeth. It was the wolf. "Mamma! mamma!" she cried with all her might, for in her fright her thoughts went off at once to her dear mamma for help. But she knew her mother could not hear; how could she have heard her, when she was ever so far out of earshot of Jack's village, and all those places Dodo had visited since she had left home? The scream went floating—floating over the flowers, without a soul to hear it, but perhaps a butterfly or two, and some birds. "It is no use making this ado, no one will


hear you," said the wolf with a horrid chuckle. "You, Red Riding Hood, escaped me once before, you will not escape again. I might eat you here and pick your bones, but I prefer doing so in the shade. Ha! ha! I can easily carry you both." He took the children up in his arms and pressed them against his ugly chest like in a vice. Dodo screamed again and again, but as the wolf said it was no use making this ado. "I shall begin by their noses," she heard him mutter, "they will be such dainty morsels, then I shall crunch their arms, the fat cheeks will be my tit-bit."

He prepared to leap. Dodo saw the leafy branches of the trees spreading a dreadful green shade on the grass below. It was just a place for a picnic, and she was to be one of the dishes of the picnic. She shut her eyes, as she felt the spring up in the air. All at once there came a noise—"click-clack, snap-snap," like the clatter of steel doors opening and shutting. The wolf gave a loud yell, and dropped Dodo and Red Riding Hood, who fell on the grass. He was standing caught in the springs of a trap that Jack had laid to catch him and his fellows. "Open the trap, dear little girls," he begged, "I only meant to frighten you a little, I shall never frighten you again," he cried, entreatingly. But neither Dodo nor Red Riding Hood stopped to answer him; up they jumped from the ground, and away, away over the flowers they sped.

Red Riding Hood ran the fastest. Dodo saw her hood no bigger than a crimson speck afar off; she looked like a red bird skimming over the grass. As she followed breathlessly Dodo caught sight of a handsome young huntsman running in the direction of the wolf, holding a lifted hatchet in his hand. She did not pause to see what became of the wolf. She did not stop running till she found herself at the entrance of Jack's village.

CHAPTER VII.

DODO TAKES A QUEER JOURNEY.

 "SHALL go home," said Dodo, sitting down on a bench to rest. "This is *much* more troublesome than lessons. Ugh! that horrid wolf with his pointed, clammy nose."

It was easy enough to say I shall go home, but how was she to get home?

"If I could only find Puss in Boots he would show me the way," thought Dodo.

There was no sign of Puss in Boots anywhere; but a few steps off she saw Mr. Jack, with his head thrown back looking up at the sky, and talking at the same time to an old woman who had only one tooth, and whose face was as rosy

as a shining apple. Her mob-cap which had a frill to it was starched and white, as if it had just come from the wash, and in her hand she held a broom. Dodo looked up to see what Jack was gazing at, and she beheld right over her head a great full moon. It seemed dim in the blue sky but it was round as a Christmas-cake. All of a sudden something seemed to go up lightly, lightly—hopping up like a big gray grasshopper. Dodo could not believe her eyes. She rubbed them and she screwed them up, and she shut and opened them, as if her lids were blinds moved up and down by a spring. Still she saw the same thing, and what do you think that was? The old woman had got upon her broomstick, and was riding up. "Old woman, old woman, whither so high? To sweep the cobwebs out of the sky?" shouted Jack, waving his hat. The old woman in a chirping voice hummed with her eyes fixed on the moon:—

To the moon, to the moon, to give it a scrub;
To polish it clean, with a rub, rub, rub;
Till it hangs in the sky like a great gold plate,
And the children may play in its light till late.

"To the moon," cried Dodo, clasping her hands. "Oh! I do so long to see it close, and know what it is made of."

"Up with you then," said Jack; and before she could say "yes or no, or if you please," the old woman had come down, and Jack had set Dodo



astride on the broomstick behind her. "In half an hour we set off for the Wedding," cried Jack, in a voice that already sounded far off. Dodo held fast to the old woman; she did not dare to look down, for it made her giddy; she could just see Jack's village like a red dot, lying far below. The broom went hopping lightly, lightly up, and the higher it went the lighter it grew, till its hop became a canter.

Up into the clouds they went; the clouds lying piled up one on the top of the other. Whew! it was like going into a cold bath; then how foggy it was. Dodo could scarcely see the old woman; she was like a shadow, with the broom's mop of a head just in front of her. As for the moon it was hidden in the mist; then "canter, canter" out of the clouds into a vast space of twilight. A great owl went screeching past, a crowd of mouse-headed bats flew backwards and forwards. Oh! what a ride it was! Still up they went, canter, canter. They were now quite in the dark. Dodo had never felt such a frightful darkness. She thought of her nursery at home with the pretty paper upon it, of her nice fresh egg in the morning. She thought of her lessons, and wished she was back to them all again. Would they ever get out of this blackness? There came a light, and with it a whirl and a fiz like a fire-engine at full speed, making straight for the broomstick. Will it strike up

against it, break it to bits, and send her flying down that awful space? No; the light passed by with a boom, and they were safe. It was a falling star. Teetotums of light went whirling madly round and round on every side. These were the little stars; and then something blazing like a kite with its tail on fire—it was a comet shining in the dark. The moon was again in sight and kept growing bigger and bigger, and the old woman hummed more cheerily. Dodo now saw quite plainly two eyes, a little nose, a fat, kind mouth—the face of the Man in the Moon. A cobweb hung out of his nostril, another made a patch over his eye, he had a wig of cobwebs, and whiskers of cobwebs, and his ears were stuffed with them. Soon Dodo could see the spiders all at work. They were as big as crabs; they wove, they spun, they threw themselves back and pulled the webby thread with their legs. The broomstick seemed to see them too, for before the old woman could say “At them!” it went at them with a dash.

Dodo grasped the old woman with all her strength. Here, there, everywhere the broom plunged about, sweeping, now the forehead, now scooping away into the ears, then tickling the nose of the Man in the Moon. This he seemed to like. Down fell the spiders—“Oh! what a rain of spiders there will be somewhere!” thought Dodo, holding on with all her might. It was terribly difficult to hold on, but the old woman seemed quite at her

ease. Over that black abyss it was like being on a thin horse, now standing upon his hind-legs, now coming down on his forelegs before you can cry "Ho!" The Man in the Moon seemed to enjoy being swept immensely; his smile grew broader and broader, and kindlier and kindlier, especially when the broom brushed away at his forehead; he looked then as if he were saying, "Scratch my head," and the old woman chuckled, and the antics of the broom became more and more extraordinary. It reared, it capered, it jumped about as it rubbed, and Dodo felt each second as if she must slip and fall. She clutched tighter. Ah! what a tumble that would be through the awful blackness yawning just below; if she went falling—falling—falling down all that terrible way they had come up! She held on harder and harder, and still she grew more frightened. As the Man in the Moon continued to smile, and the broom to rub with a will, it suddenly gave such a hop, that Dodo thought she was down—but no, she was still sitting safe astride on the stick. What was it made the broom jump like that?


Standing on the top of the man's head was an awful spider, as big as a shoulder of mutton. He was quite white with old age, and every scale of his body was standing up with fury, his eyes shone like green lamps. "The great-great-grandfather of all the spiders, if I can only sweep him off there will be no more webs in the moon,"

cried the old woman, who knew that spider well. The broom set itself for a leap. Dodo could see it trembling a little, like a pony going to take a spring—one—two—three and away.

Did it jump too high? Did it jump too low? Did it jump up against the nose of the Man in the Moon? There came a bang! Dodo felt herself falling from the broomstick, and down, down through the blackness, with the mad teetotums of light spinning past, and the blazing kite with its tail on fire; down amidst the screeching owls and the blind bats; lower, lower still, through the cold fog of the clouds, down with a thump on the ground. "Oh, dear! oh, dear! I am sure I am quite killed," said Dodo.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE RIVER.

HE extraordinary thing was that she was not killed. She was not even giddy after the tumble. She sat up and felt her head, her nose, her shoulders—they were all there, without so much as a bruise upon them. "Extraordinarier and extraordinarier!" muttered Dodo, who, not finding any word long enough

to express her astonishment, made a long word longer, without minding grammar. "But I have had quite enough of extraordinary things. I shall go home now." On looking about her as she came to this wise resolution, she found she was near a river, but she saw no trace of Jack-land. She beheld, however, what was a delightful sight—Puss in Boots at a little distance, evidently working away at something. He seemed full of business. "Puss, Puss!" she called, jumping up and running towards him.

He turned at once and began beckoning to her with his fore-paw impatiently. "Oh, Puss!" cried Dodo, "I want so much to get home; please take me home."

"Home!" exclaimed Puss, his eyes getting round as green saucers, and his moustaches spreading out. "Home, indeed! you may go home if you like, *I* am going to the Wedding."

"Whose wedding is it everyone is making such a fuss about?" asked Dodo in a voice of disdain.

"Whose wedding!" repeated Puss snappishly. "Why, the most remarkable, terrible, splendid wedding that ever has been heard of; the idea of going home, indeed!—the idea!"

"And where is it to take place?" asked Dodo, changing her mind and beginning to think she might as well go to it, and see Beauty after all.

"On the other side of the river, *of course*, and there is the boat waiting for us. I have been

mending it all the time you have been going about."

"Boat!" repeated Dodo. She looked up and down the river, and not a boat could she see, but among the rushes she perceived an immense battered shoe with a patch upon the big toe. *Such* a shoe; twelve children might have climbed up its sides and played within it. Now a fat cat was curled up inside it. "That is not a boat; that is a shoe," she remarked timidly, for, what between the size of his eyes and his moustaches, Puss in Boots did not look amiable.

"It comes to exactly the same thing," he answered. "Jump in."

"Who is that?" asked Dodo, pointing to the fat cat.

"Who? Why, that is the most celebrated cat of the day. Lord Mayor Whittington gives him 3000 rats, 5000 mice, and 9000 saucers of milk every year, for all that he once did for him," answered Puss in Boots.

"No wonder he is so fat," thought Dodo, dropping her best curtsy.

Sir Pussy Whittington made himself as small as he could to let her pass, and Dodo got inside the big toe. It was rather stuffy, but she did not like to make any remark about it, for Puss in Boots' moustaches were still spread out wrathfully on either side of his nose.

"At last!" he grumbled, taking up his oars, that

without a mistake were a pair of old birch rods. As the shoe began to move there rose a howl from the shore. What could it be? Dodo saw an immensely tall lad come running up: he was as tall as a one-storied house, chimneys included. There could be no doubt he was a boy-giant. He had no club, but he wore a red tunic fastened at the waist with a girdle, just as the giants wear in the picture-books.

"O, O, O! don't carry off my shoe," he cried. "How can I go to the Wedding with only one shoe on?" He pointed down to one foot that was bare; the other had a shoe on, with a patch on the big toe: it looked the exact fellow of the shoe Puss was using for a boat.

"It is not your shoe; it is the old woman's house," answered Puss testily. "I carried it off when she had gone to market and the children were at school."

"O, O, O! but it is my shoe," cried the lad-giant, rubbing his eyes. "When that dreadful fellow Jack killed my father he carried off everything but a pair of old shoes. I was a baby lying asleep in a corner; he did not see me or he would have killed me too. When I grew up I put on my father's shoes, but they were too big, and one muddy day I lost one. I have been looking for it ever since. O, O, O! that is my shoe—oe—oe!" The lad-giant sobbed piteously.

"Well, look here," replied Puss generously;

"when I have done with it you may have it. I only want to cross the river in it to the Wedding;" saying this he dipped into the water his oars, the dilapidated birch rods, that looked as if they had grown quite thin from the number of whippings they had given; and away skimmed the shoe.

"O, O, O!" dolefully howled the lad-giant.

Dodo felt sorry for him, still she was glad they were off. She thought, now that she had found Puss, she was sure to get to Beauty. It certainly was a deal of trouble to get that mirror, but then she remarked to herself, "It is taking all my trouble in a lump, instead of dribbling it over lessons, like taking medicine in a gulp instead of in tea-spoonfuls." The shoe had got into the broad river, and glided merrily along. Pussy Whittington purred like a lord-mayor taking his doze after dinner. Puss in Boots was in high good temper now, and his moustaches grew trim. As he rowed he, too, began to purr.

"Weel may the shoe row,
The shoe row,
The shoe row,
Weel may the shoe row,
With no babies in."

"So this is the shoe the old woman whipped her children in before she put them to bed?" thought Dodo feeling about with her hand. "I suppose those big round places were for the old giant's corns, and each of the children slept in one." After she

had looked about her Dodo lay back. Presently she felt a tickling on her nose. Thinking it was a cobweb, she brushed it off with her hand when, what do you think? Tom Thumb fell on her lap. "Why, Tom," she said, "I thought I left you behind me in Jack's-land."

"I rode on a swallow and followed your boat, for I love you so much," said Tom in his chirping voice that resembled the twitter of a bird. "I have a great favour to ask you,—will you give me a kiss?"

"If I gave you a kiss I am afraid you might slip down my mouth like a comfit," answered Dodo laughing.

"You saved me from that wasp—you are so brave—now, if you would marry me Jack would build us a house with a big door for you and a little door for me," said Tom, falling on one knee.

"Do get up, Tom," cried Dodo, "you really are *quite* small enough without going down on your knees. How *could* I marry you? What would be the use of a husband whom I could carry on my hand, and blow away with a puff?"

Tom Thumb drew himself up. "I am small but I am brave. If this boat were to be wrecked I would take you on my back and swim with you to shore," he said in an offended tone. He had scarcely said this when Dodo jumped up, and Pussy Whittington stood up and looked like a giant's muff, with a pair of green eyes stuck

in the middle. Puss in Boots scampered about on tiptoe, for something had happened. What was it? The patch on the big toe of the shoe had given way and the water was pouring in—gurggle, gurggle, clo, clo—it rushed in rising, rising, and the shoe was going down, down. As Pussy Whittington's paws got wet he spat and he hissed, while Puss in Boots, shouldering his birch rods, tried to sweep the water back. It was no use. Dodo felt the water rising up, up, up to her chin. She heard two dismal mews, a great splash, then the shoe, the two Pussies, Tom Thumb—everything disappeared; and she was all alone on the wide water—water before her and behind her, and all around her, nothing but water. Ah! was she going to be drowned? Suddenly she espied a boat coming towards her; it was making right for her, and as it came nearer and nearer she saw there was a man all dressed in skins sitting in it.

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE ISLAND.



HO could he be? Opposite to him was sitting a black man showing his white teeth. The man dressed in skins might have been a hairy animal, for he was hairy from head to foot. His hair and moustache

were long and red. His face was so tanned that it was the colour of a dried pippin. He carried a large umbrella, and a parrot sat on his shoulder. He was nodding his head as if to make Dodo understand she was not to be frightened. Still she was frightened, for she had never seen any man look so strange, and the black man opposite gibbered and chattered like a monkey; but when they came near, and the hairy man took her up, she felt that his grasp was gentle and kind. "Robinson Crusoe—poor, poor Robinson Crusoe," cried the parrot, looking at Dodo, his head on one side, very much like an old lady examining goods in a shop.

"Are you Robinson Crusoe?" said Dodo with a sigh of relief.

The hairy man nodded, and two tears trickled down either side of his nose. "I am Robinson Crusoe, and very glad I am to see you; it is the best thing has happened to me since I found my goat."

"And me am man Friday," said the black man, pointing to himself with his thumb, and smiling so broadly that his smile seemed as if it would go round his head, only it was stopped by his ears.

"Baa!" went the goat cheerily

"Robinson Crusoe—poor Robinson Crusoe!" screamed the parrot.

They all seemed so glad to see her that Dodo could

not feel frightened with them. The hot sun dried her clothes, and Robinson held his umbrella over her, saying, "I'll make a nest for you in a coconut-tree for the summer, and when the rainy weather comes I'll build you a pretty hut, and I'll feed you on grapes, melons, and cakes and goats' milk."

"In what sea is your island, Robinson?" asked Dodo.

Robinson Crusoe scratched his head. "Is there a sea called Tumbling-about Sea?" he asked.

"I never heard of it," replied Dodo, thinking of all the seas she had learned the names of. "But never mind, it's no matter, for you know it is always the sea."

Just then the boat ran up a little bay, with tall palm-trees shading it, through which a vast number of monkeys peeped out. On the shore goats, dogs, cats were waiting, and when the boat came in they all made a tremendous ado. "Massa and me brought little white girl," cried Friday, tumbling head over heels from the boat to the shore. The monkeys swung themselves down by their tails, and began to tumble head over heels too. Then there was such an uproar of barking, baying, mewling, chattering, that Dodo had never heard such a hubbub.

"Quiet, quiet; we must not frighten our little visitor," said Robinson Crusoe, taking her gently up in his arms. He carried her on his shoulder,

and the dogs, the goat the cats, the parrots fell into a procession, while man Friday and the monkeys went through the most extraordinary capers. Dodo clapped her hands and laughed, and when she laughed Robinson Crusoe's eyes shone, and a big tear trickled down his moustache and beard. "Why do you cry? Don't you like me to laugh, Robinson?" she asked.

"It is gladness makes me cry," he answered. "I have not heard a little girl's laugh for such a long, long time. It is better than when I first saw my goat; it is better a thousand times."

They had now come to a place on the island where there were orange-trees, where bananas hung like golden purses, where there were pomegranates and grapes growing, and a great many beautiful flowers. "I shall build you a hut here; it is the prettiest place in the island; and now we'll make a feast to celebrate your coming," said Robinson.

"I think I shall go to sleep," said Dodo. She did not want to sleep really, but she wanted to think how she could manage to get away from this place, surrounded on all sides by the sea.

"While you are asleep we shall get things ready, make ourselves a bit tidy," said Robinson.

"Why, who lives here?" asked Dodo, catching a glimpse of a house some way off.

"That's where our visitors live," answered Friday.

"Hush!" said Robinson, "do not speak about them to the little girl."

Dodo shut her eyes and rested her head against the trunk of a tree. She heard them all steal softly away. "Further and further than ever," she muttered sadly. "How shall I ever get home now, or even get to the Wedding?" Her heart felt heavy; still she determined she would find a way of getting out somehow. A good deal of bustle was going on, she opened her eyes and she saw Robinson Crusoe sweeping out his hut. He had put on a new skin dress, washed his face and brushed his hair. Friday was cleaning his gun, and had stuck a red feather in his hair; the monkeys were helping each other to comb, the parrots were preening their feathers, the dogs, the cats, the goats were taking a bath in the sea. "They are making themselves as smart as if I were a whole dinner-party," said Dodo.

The house where the visitors were staying peeped through the trees. "Perhaps they will tell me how I can get away," she thought. She got up softly and walked on tiptoe towards it. Every one was so busy that no one saw her move. It was a very odd-looking house; it had three doors, three windows, and three chimneys, a big, a middle sized, and a little one of each. The big door was black; it had a great brass knob, that caught the sun-light and looked like a fierce eye watching; the middle door was gray, with nothing at all remarkable

about it, and the little one was brown with a step in front of it, and an arched top that made it look as if it were standing on tiptoe and trying to make itself tall. This door stood ajar. Dodo pushed it open a little more and looked in. She saw a very cosy room; near the fire-place were three chairs; a big arm-chair lined with red cushions, a middle-sized arm-chair that just looked like any other arm-chair, and a little arm-chair that had a nice round brown back to it, and a cane seat that seemed new, as if it had been just put in. On the table were three plates of porridge, a large plate with a great puff of steam going up, a middle-sized plate with a whiff of steam going up, and a wee plate with a little blue steam curling up. "It is just like the house of the three Bears," thought Dodo. The porridge smelt very good, but remembering Silver Hair's fate she would not for all the world have touched it. She was standing on the threshold when she heard growling behind her, a growl like a mutter of thunder, a growl like the sound of a cart wheel, a growl like a squeak. She turned, and there were the three Bears. The big one was an immense black Bear, that looked like a mountain made of hair. The middle-sized Bear was a gray Bear, and had nothing remarkable about it; the little Bear was a brown Bear, and his fur stood in tight little curls about his body. He was skipping about, and his little eyes were dancing with anger.

"There is the wicked little girl who ate my porridge, who sat out the bottom of my chair, who went to sleep in my bed," he screamed in his shrill voice.

"We must eat her up," said the big Bear in his tremendous growl.

"We must eat her up," said the middle Bear, exactly as big Bear said it, only without his roar.

"We must eat her up, we must eat her up," shrieked the little Bear; "if we don't eat her up she'll eat my porridge again, she'll sit out the new bottom of my chair, she'll go to sleep in my bed."

"Don't eat me up, don't eat me up," cried Dodo putting up her hands. "I am not, indeed I am not Silver Hair. Silver Hair was a little girl in a story—I am a true little girl. I never ate your porridge, I never sat out the bottom of your chair, I never slept in your bed, little Bear; indeed, indeed I never did."

"You *are* Silver Hair, and if you were not we must eat you up all the same," squeaked little Bear, jumping about on his tiny feet. "We came to Robinson Crusoe's Island because we thought there are no little girls there to eat up my porridge, to sit out the bottom of my chair, to sleep in my bed."

"Don't, don't eat me up, kind Mr. Bear," cried Dodo, falling on her knees.

"We must eat you up because you are a little girl," roared big Bear in his deep mutter, crouching down to spring upon Dodo.

"We must eat you up because you are a little girl," said the middle-sized Bear, crouching exactly like big Bear.

"I must eat you up, I shall eat you up, I *will* eat you up," cried little Bear in his peevish squeak, crouching till he was like a trembling ball of fur.

Dodo looked from one to the other for pity, but she met only their six angry eyes fixed upon her, and saw their three forms ready to spring upon her. It was worse than the wolf, for there were three to eat her up. How was she to escape this time? She hid her face in her hands and uttered a cry.

She heard a noise. Was it the leap of the Bears? No; it was a voice calling, "Stop, stop!" She looked up; it was Robinson Crusoe walking towards her with long steps. Friday was running behind, still on his head and his heels. The monkeys were tumbling by his side. The goats, the dogs, the cats, the parrots, everything that lived on the island was coming to her rescue; the next minute Robinson Crusoe had taken her up in his arms and had placed her upon his shoulder. "Those who frighten this little girl," he said, "are no friends of mine."

"No friends of mine," cried Friday, rolling his eyes.

"I shall put them out of my island," cried Robinson.

"A little girl once ate my porridge and sat in my chair, and slept in my bed," said the little Bear in an angry squeak.

"Pooh! what of that?" said Robinson Crusoe.

"What of that?" said Friday. The monkeys chattered, and all the animals seemed to scold little Bear for caring so much for his porridge and his comfort.

"Those who do not love this little girl are no friends of mine," repeated Robinson Crusoe; "I shall not take them out in my boat."

"We'll make friends with her," said big Bear, putting out a paw for Dodo to shake. It was so large, and the hair so long, that it looked like a fur cloak hanging from a peg.

"We'll make friends with her," said middle-sized Bear, putting out a paw that looked like a paw, and nothing else.

"*Perhaps* I'll make friends with her," said little Bear, not putting out his paw, "if she promises not to eat my porridge, or sit in my chair, or sleep in my bed."

"I'll not eat your porridge, or sit in your chair, or sleep in your bed, little Bear," said Dodo, putting out her hand. The wee Bear reached out a tiny paw, and then put out his little, cold, black nose to kiss Dodo.

"Now we are friends," said Robinson Crusoe.

"Hurrah!" shouted Friday. "Hurrah!" screamed the parrots. The monkeys flung cocoa-nuts up in

the air for joy, and all the animals joined paws and danced in a round. Dodo felt like a queen perched on Robinson's shoulder. "You must row me over in your boat to the Wedding, Robinson," she cried in a commanding voice.

"What Wedding is it?" asked Robinson.

"I don't know," answered Dodo.

"Where is it to be?" asked Robinson.

"I don't know," answered Dodo.

"Then I'm afraid I can't take you," said Robinson, scratching his head. Friday and the monkeys looked at each other. How could Robinson row Dodo over to the Wedding when she did not know where it was to take place. As they were all thinking how this could be done, the parrots screamed, "The postwoman, the postwoman!" and Friday and all the animals scampered off in the same direction. Something darkened the sun. Dodo thought it was a cloud. Then she saw it was a big bird, with some one riding on its back. "Who could it be?"

"It is Mother Goose," said Robinson, "she brings us our letters." Sure enough Dodo saw a white goose flying down, and on its back was an old woman carrying a bag of letters tied on the top of a broomstick.

"Good morning, every one," she said in a business-like tone, as the goose touched the ground. "Can't stop a minute. Don't press round me. Yes, there are letters for everybody."

"Have a drink, Mrs. Goose, after your long ride," said Robinson.

"Just a sip and I'm off," answered Mother Goose, tossing off the milk of a cocoa-nut Friday brought her. She opened her bag. There seemed to be as many letters in it as in a postman's on Valentine's Day—square letters, tricornered letters, silver-edged letters, ugly greasy letters. "There is your letter, Mr. Robinson," she said, as she handed him a dainty pink letter with a silver border.

"Dear, dear!" exclaimed Robinson, holding it with the tips of his fingers, and putting on a great pair of green spectacles. He held the letter upside down as he tried to spell it out. "You are holding it all wrong," said Dodo; "and it is not for you at all, it is for Cinderella."

"What does that signify?" said Mother Goose, "one letter is as good as another." She was giving the letters all wrong. Friday had a long greasy one addressed to the wicked uncle of the Babes in the Wood. Little Bear's letter was meant for Red Riding Hood. But as no one knew how to read, as Mother Goose said, it did not signify.

Robinson Crusoe had learnt to read long ago, but now he had almost forgotten. It always took him a long time to find out first that he held his letter the right side up, and then to try to spell out the words. Still they were all very glad to have letters. The great thing was to have a

letter coming in an envelope through the post in the air, with a stamp in a corner. The stamp was a wee picture of Mother Goose riding on her bird with her broomstick in front of her, and the bag of letters on the top.

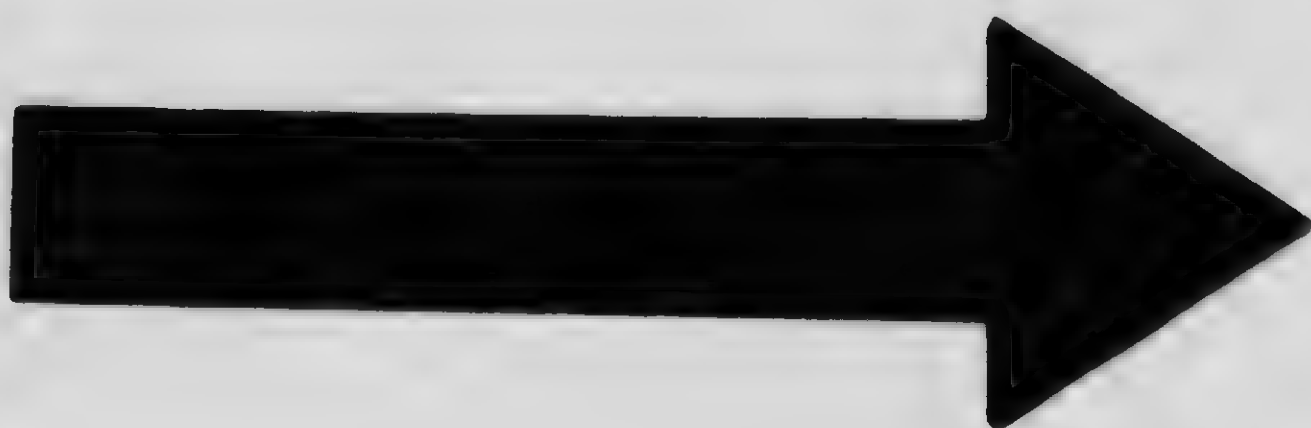
"Can you tell me where the Wedding is, Mistress Goose?" asked Robinson.

"On the other side of Tumbling-about Sea," answered Mother Goose.

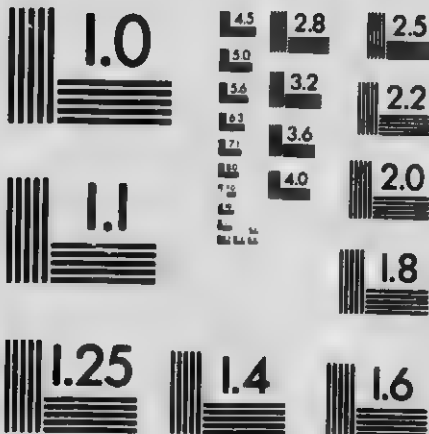
"This little girl wants to get to it," said Robinson.

"Tell her to jump on my Goose, behind me, this minute, at once—letters can't wait, letters can't wait," said Mother Goose.

Dodo got up on the goose in a minute. Before she could say good-bye to anyone it was rising—rising—rising—up it went. She looked down. Everyone was crying because she was going. Robinson was wiping his tears away with one hand, and waving his skin cap with the other. Friday was standing on his head, and his tears were trickling down his forehead to the sand. The monkeys were crying inside their cocoa-nuts. Little Bear had his face hidden in his paws. The dogs were howling, the cats were mewling, and the goats ba-a-ing sadly. "Little girl going. Poor, poor Robinson Crusoe," cried the parrots.



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CHAPTER. X.

RIDING TO THE WEDDING.

P, up, still they went rising—rising until Dodo could see no more of anything or anybody in Robinson Crusoe's Island, and it looked as small as a toy that she might cover with her hand, floating in the blue, blue sea. The bird with its great wings flapping made a comfortable seat. It was like going through the air in a white boat. She held on tight to Mother Goose, who kept crooning a song to herself. Dodo could hear her singing something like this:—

Letters—Valentines,
Pretty little lines;
I must bring them all
To folk great and small
The old Man of the Moon
Must have his letter soon.
Ho! that one comes from far,
Sealed with a twinkling star.

Dodo tried to find out from Mother Goose who it was that was going to be married. But the old woman would not talk. "Letters won't wait, letters won't wait," was all she would say. Suddenly the goose came down with a loud cackle and flutter, and Dodo found herself among

a quantity of reeds and rushes on the other side. "Get off, get off," said Mother Goose, "letters won't wait, letters won't wait."

"But where am I to go?" Dodo asked, slipping down from the goose's back; "where is the Wedding to take place?"

"Turn to your right, then take the third turning to your left. Keep on straight awhile, then turn again—on straight awhile, then turn again—once, twice, thrice, make five tumbles, stand on your head, wink twice, sneeze once, and you'll see the place right before you," said Mother Goose as she rose up in the air.

"Oh," thought Dodo, "what a lot of things to remember! but I shall try. I must turn to my right anyhow first, so far that is easy." She was turning on her right when on her left there broke the clang of a bell:

"Ding-ding! ding-dong!
Ding-dong! ding-dong! ding!"

She looked that way, and she saw a gray castle with two towers on each side of it, and before the door a white bull was standing pulling a bell with all his might:

"Ding-dong! ding-dong!
Ding-dong! ding-dong! ding!"

"I wonder what that is for," said Dodo. "I should not be at all surprised if that is where the

Wedding is to take place, and Mother Goose has set me all wrong. She has no notion of going the right way. I think she is a big goose herself." Then she saw that at a distance a great crowd seemed to be making its way towards the castle. It was certainly likely to be a wonderful wedding. Such crowds were going.

"I will wait here and ask the way to it of the first person who passes," she thought to herself. She had not long to wait. A young lady, the prettiest she thought she had ever seen in her life, came running up. She had a diamond crown on her head, but her eyes were so bright that they were brighter than the diamonds. They were very wide open eyes, and they were never quiet. They glanced about and seemed to see everything. "Look here!" she kept saying. "Look there! look at this tree! look there at that bird! Look here, there is a little girl. She is wanting something." The lady said this in as little time as it would have taken another person to draw a breath. Who could she be? Dodo wondered. She was as active as a grasshopper which you cannot catch on a summer day. Jump here, pop there, flurry, flurry, scurry, scurry. A thin, pale, tired-looking gentleman, in a red cloak and an imposing white wig, was trying hard to keep up with her, and to turn his eyes in all the different directions she kept pointing to, but it was a very difficult task, for the pretty lady kept

starting and running a few steps, first this way then that way. Two splendid footmen in red livery ran behind with their eyes shut, taking a dose as they ran.

"What are you looking for? What do you want? Can I help you? Quick, sharp—one, two, three, and away," said the lady in a brisk voice to Dodo. When she stopped running the gentleman and the two footmen stretched themselves on the ground and were asleep in a minute.

"I want to know where the Wedding takes place," replied Dodo.

"Look there where the bull is pulling the bell. Do you want to go? Of course you do. One, two, three, give me your hand," and she set off at a run again. "One, two, three. Run, jump, tumble. Don't you see the crowds going to the Wedding? They must somehow account get to the castle before me; but where is my Lord Chamberlain!" she exclaimed suddenly running back. "Gone to sleep! what a man he is for going to sleep, and the servants too! Were there ever such sluggards? Oh, you lazy-bones! Wake up—one, two, three—run, jump, tumble. I'll stick a pin into you."

"May it please Your Royal Highness," said the pale Chamberlain sitting up, "it is too early yet for the Wedding."

"Early! not a bit of it," repeated the Princess, "never too early, one can never run too fast, or

tumble too briskly, or come to a place too early—nothing like activity—run, jump, tumble.”

“Your Royal Highness is rightly called Princess Wide Awake,” said the Chamberlain yawning. “I only want a little nap. May it please Your Royal Highness to remember you had your sleep once: you slept a hundred years straight off.”

“Oh! you are Sleeping Beauty! *no wonder* you are so wide awake now after that long sleep!” said Dodo.

“Do not remind me of that time. I am so ashamed to think I wasted one hundred years in sleep!” answered the Princess.

“Wasted in sleep, beautiful sleep!” drawled the Chamberlain giving such a yawn that Dodo saw all down his throat.

“Beautiful sleep!” yawned the footmen behind.

“Well, I never do anything by halves, and I am wide awake now,” said the Princess with energy. “The Prince, my husband, and I are always busy. I sometimes fancy he goes to sleep when I am not there. To-day he would not come to the Wedding. I am afraid he wanted to doze, but I,—I shall never go to sleep again so long as I live! I shall never take a wink of sleep.”

“Never! how dreadful!” said Dodo.

“It is frightful waste of time,” said the Princess. “Jump up, lazy-bones—tumble, run, jump, quick, hurry. Stick a pin into you—one, two,

three, and away." She set off at a brisker pace than ever, holding Dodo's hand, who found it very difficult to keep up with her.

"I wish the Prince had never woke the Princess up," muttered the Chamberlain running with his eyes shut, and his head nodding, nodding; and the footmen followed with their eyes shut, and their heads nodding, nodding. As they ran the Chamberlain sung to the melancholy sound of a yawn:

"Beautiful sleep!—oh for a snore;
Put me to bye-bye I want to sleep more."

"Is not that a shocking song?" said the Princess.

"I like it," replied Dodo. "You ought to let your subjects sleep. They have not had a hundred years' rest. It must be very uncomfortable to be as wide awake as you are."

"You are just as lazy as any of them," said the Princess with a severe look in her pretty bright eyes. "I shall have nothing more to do with you." She dropped Dodo's hand, gathered up her skirts, and set off at a more rapid pace.

Dodo sat down panting by the roadside. The Chamberlain, with his robes fluttering and the white wig falling over his eyes, passed her, following the Princess, nodding, nodding. The footmen came after nodding, nodding also.

"Poor things, how worn-out they are!" thought

Dodo. "They look like a pennyworth of soap after a week's washing."

She could now distinctly see the crowds of people going to the Wedding—short people, tall people, fat people, lean people, hobbling, jumping, running, riding towards the castle, at the door of which stood the white bull pulling the bell. Young people, old people, middle-aged people, and no end of little girls; some wore poked hats, others pointed hats, others no hats at all. Some had crowns on their heads. Oh, what a wonderful Wedding it was going to be! Birds were flying, pigs were squeaking, and they were all going to the Wedding. But the pleasantest sight of all to Dodo, and that which made her stare, was Puss in Boots coming along skipping in his little boots. He looked as dry as if he had never fallen into the water. Pussy Whittington walked behind him, but his fur hung lank and wet as if it would never dry. It was evident Puss in Boots had jumped on his back, and made the fat fellow swim him to shore. On either side of Pussy walked two persons who were talking loud, one was the boy-giant who kept holding up and pointing to the foot that had the shoe on with a patch on the big toe. The other was an old woman with a stiff new birch in her hand, which she kept waving about as if she would dearly like to whip somebody with it.

When Puss in Boots caught sight of Dodo

running up to meet him, he gave a wink which said as plain as wink could say, "Don't say a word."

"I tell you it was *my* house," said the old woman in a rage. "I lived in it, I put my children to bed in it, I whipped them in it; where is the shoe?"

"I think I know where the shoe is," said Puss in Boots stroking his moustache. "You see one shoe cannot belong to two people at the same time, so as it belonged to neither of you, I took it." "Took it!" cried the old woman with another twirl of her birch.

"But I will give it back to either of you who will fetch it," said Puss in Boots magnanimously.

"Where is it? where is it?" cried the giant and the old woman in the same breath.

"At the bottom of the sea," shouted Puss jumping away as fast as his booted feet could carry him.

"O, O, O!" sobbed the boy giant, "how can I go to the Wedding with only one shoe on?"

The old woman walked up and down, looking so angry that she did not know what to do. She must certainly whip somebody. Just then all the good little children passed on their way to the Wedding. They looked so prim in their starched white dresses, more than ever like Miss Propriety, their hair was shining, and all curtsied as they passed. The old woman walked about waving her rod. She must whip some-

body. There were all these nice little girls handy and close. She went in among them, and began to whip first one, then another, till she had whipped every one of them. The good little girls all began to cry, till the air was full of their cries. It was piteous to hear the wail of all these good little girls who had never done anything in all their lives to deserve a whipping, who curtsied so nicely, and always did the right thing. Dodo felt quite sorry for them, but she ran nimbly away for she was afraid of being whipped also. She escaped down the road and saw a coach driving to the Wedding. She recognized it at once. There were the six sleek horses, the fat coachman with the big moustache, the two lean footmen. It was Cinderella's coach. Would Beauty be in it? Cinderella had said she was going to fetch her to take her to the Wedding. There were four people inside. By the side of the Prince with the nice blue eyes, sat some one very like Big Bear with a fine scarlet coat on, and near Cinderella was the loveliest of all the pretty ladies Dodo had seen that day. Who was she? She wore a wreath of roses, and her lap was full of roses. Could these be some of the famous roses that grew in Beast's garden. Cinderella stopped the coach when she saw Dodo and said, "This is my friend Princess Beast."

So Dodo found herself at last standing before Beauty, to whom the mirror belonged, in the hope

getting which she had gone through so much, encountered so many perils and met such queer people, and she could not say a word, for her heart beat so quick. Beauty nodded kindly to her, and she took courage. "Have you got the mirror still where you see everything?" she asked, blurring out her words so quickly that they seemed to knock against each other.

"My mirror, my dear fairy mirror?" cried Beauty. "I would not part with it for all the world; it makes me the wisest princess in fairyland. I never learn any lessons. I play in my rose-garden all day long, and yet I know everything by just looking into it."

"I knew it," cried Dodo, her eyes aflame, her cheeks glowing with excitement. "Where, where can I get one like it?"

"Come to the palace," said kind Prince Beast putting a furry hand upon her shoulder, "and I shall give you one. It will not be so large or so handsome as the one I gave my wife, but it will make you as learned."

"I do not care a bit about its being handsome," cried Dodo. "I only want to know all my lessons without trouble, and to see all sorts of things. I do not care for that Wedding. I only care for that mirror; if you please tell me the way to your palace."

"You must lose your way in the wood yonder, it is quite easy," said Prince Beast.

"Quite easy," echoed Beauty, Cinderella, and the blue-eyed Prince in a chorus.

"I have been losing my way all day long, and I have not found the palace yet," said Dodo dolefully.

"After the Wedding, wait for me under the castle-door, just where the white bull is pulling the bell, and I shall show you how to lose your way to our palace," said Prince Beast.

"Ah! we must hurry now," exclaimed Cinderella. "What would my stepmother say if I were late for her wedding?"

"*Her* wedding! Is *she* the Bride?" cried Dodo opening her eyes.

The four people nodded sadly.

"Well, I *am* astonished. Who is the bridegroom?"

At this question the two Princes hid their faces in their hats. The two Princesses burst into tears behind their handkerchiefs. "Don't ask; he is just behind us. Ah! it is something dreadful that is going to happen!" they sobbed. The coachman whipped his horses; away sped the carriage.

"Remember to meet me after the Wedding!" called Prince Beast, putting his head out of the window.

"Remember!" cried Dodo, dancing and skipping about. "Remember to eat my dinner when I am hungry, to drink when I am thirsty, to do what I like to do whenever I can, but remember

nothing so well as this." She capered and bounded for joy, and her shadow bounded and capered too like a mocking elf at her feet on the ground. At last—at last she was going to be the most learned little maid in the world, without taking a scrap of trouble to be wise.

As she was dancing, the rumble of carriage-wheels approaching struck her ears. "The bridegroom," muttered Dodo, "I hope he is not too nice. Who can he be who would marry that cruel step-mother?" She stopped short, for the carriage that was approaching was not like a wedding-coach. It was drawn by two black horses; the coachman was dressed from head to foot in black. Dodo crept under the shadow of a tree to see the black carriage pass in which the bridegroom sat. Who could he be? He had bushy black eyebrows, black hair, and shining black eyes; but it was by his beard Dodo recognized him, and trembled in her hiding-place as she did so. It was a long, thick, blue beard spreading over his chest, and reaching down to his waist. "Ah, it is Blue Beard! Then, indeed, something terrible is going to happen." When he came near the place where she was hiding Blue Beard stopped the coach and got out. Dodo drew closer under the shadow of the tree as she heard other steps approaching; then she saw the Villain, who had been watching the Babes in the Wood coming to meet him. He had still that black patch over

his left eye, and his long dirty nails; in his hand he held a pointed butcher's knife. They came and stood quite near her. Dodo heard what they said.

"Is the knife sharp?" asked Blue Beard.

"Sharper than a razor," answered the villain.

"I am going to kill her," said Blue Beard; "as soon as we are married I shall kill her." This he said with a chuckle, stroking his blue beard. "I shall hold her by the hair and cut her stringy neck with one flourish of my sword. Is the peg in the closet ready? She shall hang with the other wives."

"It is ready," said the Villain. "When you have killed her give me the knife. The Babes in the Wood are not dead. They only make believe to be dead. The birds of the air feed them with fruit, and they bring them all the crumbs children put out on their window-silla. But they are coming to the Wedding. Mother Goose gave them the wrong letters, and they are coming."

"Yes," answered Blue Beard, with his wicked chuckle, "I will give you the knife." They both laughed and they went off together.

"Oh! how dreadful!" said Dodo wringing her hands. "What a terrible thing is going to happen!" She wiped her eyes and looked about her. She forgot all her joy at being sure of the mirror. All she cared to do now was to tell the bride and the

Babes in the Wood not to go the Wedding. She glanced down the road, hoping to see some signs of them, when she heard a clapping of hands, and a tread of feet keeping measure, and she saw a regiment of boys in nice white linen trousers and aprons, and white linen caps. They were carrying a fine wedding-cake. As they went along they sang:

Pat a cake, pat a cake, baker's man,
Bake me a cake as fast as you can;
Prick it, and pat it, and mark it with T,
And put in the oven for my bride and me.

"Silly boys," cried Dodo, "nobody will eat your cake. The bride is going to be killed. It will be a funeral, not a wedding." But they only continued to clap their hands, nod their heads at her in measure, and went on singing.

"What shall I do?" thought Dodo; "oh! what shall I do? If I could only warn the bride and the Babes in the Wood not to go to the Wedding!" Just then she heard a tinkling of bells coming nearer and nearer, and she saw a beautiful white horse cantering along. He had golden bells on his bridle, on his saddle, and around his head. An elderly woman rode on this fine cock-horse. She had no wreath. Her hair was in curl papers, her nose was hooked. Dodo recognized her at once. She was Cinderella's stepmother. Splendid rings flashed on her fingers, and to her slippers were fastened golden bells. Dodo thought she had never

seen anything so fine as this white horse going cantering along with the golden bells ringing, ringing at every step he took, and the bride's rings flashing, till the air was full of the tinkling of golden bells, and of little rays of many-coloured lights dancing about her hands. "You are the bride, are you not?" asked Dodo rushing almost under the horse's feet.

"Little girls should not ask questions," said the stern lady nodding her head.

"Don't go," cried Dodo breathlessly, "something dreadful is going to happen to you; they will kill you."

"Little girls should be seen and not heard," said the Stepmother severely, shaking her head till all the curl papers went shaking too. "If you wish to ride a cock-horse, jump up behind me."

"Don't go; they will kill you and the Babes in the Wood," Dodo said again.

"Get up behind me," again said the Stepmother.

Dodo jumped up; she must try to save the Babes if she cannot save the Bride. Tinkle, tinkle went the bells as the rider pulled the bridle. The brave white horse shook his mane and stepped out proudly, and the bells tinkled louder and more airily. Did ever a bride ride more merrily to her wedding?

On, on they go, nearer and nearer to the grim castle in which is the terrible closet. The Bull is

still pulling the bell. They pass the good little girls, who wipe their tears away, forgetting they have been unjustly whipped, and duck a frightened little curtsy, as the white horse goes prancing past, and the golden bells tinkle. Red Riding Hood runs out of the wood to scatter cowslips in the path; but, oh! she lets them all drop from her lap, for a trembling seizes her as she looks at the Bride. They reach the castle door. "Ding dong," clangs the bell. The Man all Tattered and Torn, with his cold as bad as ever, is waiting to hold the horse. A crowd of people stand outside the door, for there is no more room inside. The bell continues to swing backward and forward. Hark! Dodo hears it say through the clapping:


Ding-dong, ding-dong-ding,
Soon I'll toll the knell
Of the bride who rides,
If she cannot tell
Where the secret hides.
Ding-dong, ding-dong, dong.

Jack is there; he comes forward to help them down from the horse. "There is a secret. Do you hear, Jack? There is a secret," says Dodo, eagerly. "If you don't find it out the Bride and the Babes will be killed."

Jack puckers up his face till it is all creases. He puts his forefinger to his forehead. "A secret! I shall find it out. Don't be afraid, I shall come to the rescue."

CHAPTER XI.

THE WEDDING.

ODO went inside. What a great crowd there was. Everybody was there; Mother Hubbard in a fine new cloak, and her dog by her side; the woman with the troublesome pig; Bo-peep with her crook in her hand, and her skirt full of flowers; Wide Awake Beauty looking about with her bright, restless eyes. Cinderella, too, and alas! there were the pretty pale Babes in the Wood, standing near the Bridegroom, who kept stroking his blue beard. The Villain with the patch on his eye stood close to him, watching the Babes—a few strawberry leaves still stuck to their dresses, and the Robin fluttered about with a leaf in his beak. Two golden chairs with red cushions were placed for the Bride and Bridegroom—in front of which stood the wedding-cake. The Priest all shaven and shorn was waiting, and the Raven by his side, with his book spread open before him. As the Bride stepped inside the church the peal of the bell suddenly changed, all at once it sent forth a deep boom. Blue Beard came forward to meet her and took her by the hand. His black eyes shone as they looked at her. How black they were, like big blots of ink on his yellow face. “Come, my Bride,” he said, “I am

waiting for you. Listen to the joy bells announcing our wedding." There came another clang as he said this, so deep and doleful, that it seemed to make the castle shake. The stern Bride grew pale at the sound, as if her heart was beginning to quake. No one spoke as she walked down with her hand in that of the Bridegroom, except Puss in Boots, who said in his cracked voice, "I call it a splendid wedding. They are just the two people who ought to marry: the two most disagreeable people in Fairyland." Still the bell went on tolling, and at each mournful clang the castle seemed to shake, while out of its dim corners the dust rolled forth like a heavy fog, dimming the daylight.

"Begin, you shaven and shorn old Priest," said Blue Beard in his gruff voice, "I am in a hurry to be married;" and the fat Priest, his teeth chattering with fright, mumbled out some words. Dodo did not hear what they were, she was looking into the dimness, trying to see if Jack was coming to reveal the secret that would deliver the Bride and the Babes; nowhere could she see his clever face. Through the fog of dust growing darker and darker she perceived the crowd watching. Everybody was pale, everybody seemed to feel that something terrible was going to happen. Dodo alone knew what it was. The Cow with the Crumpled Horn stood at the door chewing the cud, and watching with his

big round eyes. The Robin watched with his bright eyes. The Man all Tattered and Torn looked in—Dodo could hear him sneeze. Puss in Boots was near her blinking at the Raven. Wide Awake Beauty never removed her eyes from the terrible bridegroom; all—all watched except the Chamberlain and footmen. They were snoring very loud; they did not care what was going to happen. The old woman with the pig kept munching her bunch of blackberries. She was not looking, but piggy watched, his little snout trembling with excitement.

All the time the Priest muttered, the bell tolled, and the place grew darker and darker till it was so gloomy that it might have been the terrible closet, with the skeletons of the other wives hanging up. And now the ceremony is over. What is that thing shining through the dark? The Villain has drawn out the long butcher's knife. Blue Beard puts his hand out for it.

"I have a bright present for you," he says to the Bride, with a wicked chuckle, "here it is," and with a flash he twirls the sword above his head.

"Jack, Jack," cries Dodo, "where are you? Have you found out the secret?" She rushes to the door to see if he is coming.

"Secret," cries Blue Beard grinding his teeth! "I shall kill anyone who pries into my secrets."

The Bride had fallen upon her knees, but now she springs to her feet hoping to escape. Over

the benches she clambers, hiding behind the guests, who hustle together to conceal her, for Blue Beard is running after her. What a terrible game of hide-and-seek that is through the darkness, while Dodo watches at the door! Oh! will Jack never come? The Bride is crouching behind her now. Dodo spreads out her skirts to hide her. Blue Beard is looking everywhere; he does not see his victim there. "Is anyone coming?" whispers the Stepmother.

Yes; there is dust rising in the road; alas! it is only Bo Peep's sheep. They have not found their tails yet, but they frolic and ba-a-a as if they had a tail apiece. The Bride thinks she is safe; but Dodo all at once meets the black eyes of the Bridegroom. He is bending over her, his blue beard touches her cheek.

"I see her; she is there," he says with his cruel laugh, pointing with his finger over Dodo's shoulder. "When I have killed her, I shall marry you next," and he chuckles again. Then he clutches the Stepmother by the hair. Oh! how he clutches!

"Do not kill me," she cries, "do not kill me."

"I married you only to kill you," he answers. "One—two—three," and he twirls his sword in the air.

"Oh! will Jack never come?"

"One minute, one little minute," implores the Bride.

"Just time to say one—two—three,—three times over," cries Blue Beard, flourishing his sword again. The Bride falls on her knees. Dodo puts her hands before her eyes; she will not see the dreadful deed. She thinks of her quiet home, of her dear mamma; she wishes with all the might of her little heart that she had not wandered from her; that she could see those loving eyes, and feel herself by that gentle side again. The Bridegroom is sharpening his knife all the while chuckling to himself. On—two—three— one—two—and the sweep of his sword swishes through the air like the passage of wind. He counts again, one—two—suddenly there is a tramp of feet. Dodo opens her eyes. Some one has run in with a light. It is Jack.

She sees him run to the Bridegroom, and before the sword can come down to the Bride's neck he has put his torch to the blue beard and set it on fire. It is a sheet of flame! The Bridegroom begins to caper and roar; he clutches his beard, but it crackles and blazes up—up—up. Down falls the knife from his hand. Jack picks it up, and then the bell stops its tolling and bursts out into a merry peal. It seems as if it would split its sides for joy.

Ding-dong, ding.	The secret is found.
Ding-dong, ding.	In the beard it lay.
Ding-ding, dong.	Be merry all round.
Ding-ding, dong.	On this wedding-day.

"That is for having killed wives one, two, three, four, five, six, and meaning to kill wife number seven," cries Jack, as the guests hurrah, and Blue Beard continues to dance up and down, to shout, and to grasp his beard in the vain hope of extinguishing the flames. At last Jack takes a pitcher from the Man all Tattered and Torn, and dashing it over Blue Beard, puts out the fire.

The Bridegroom looked a sorry figure; all dripping wet, his beard burnt to a stubble, his bushy eyebrows shrivelled, his skin scorched—yet for all his plight he was pleasanter to look at than before. There was something in the expression of his eyes that seemed to indicate that he felt happier, as if relieved from some evil power that had held sway over him. The Bride looked pale and altered also, as if her harsh spirit was broken. It was astonishing now to see how no one was any longer afraid of either of them. The Robin perched on Blue Beard's nose; Piggy ran in and out of his legs; Puss in Boots gave him a friendly pat on the arm, saying, bygones would be bygones. Cinderella kissed her stepmother, who, bursting into tears, begged her to forgive her. "See that your husband shaves every day," said Jack, "that will give you plenty to do—it will keep your hands from the birch and your mouth from scolding."

"I shall never frighten anyone again or be cruel," sobs the Bride.

"We shall keep each other in order," remarks

Blue Beard, with a grim smile that was not so unpleasant as it might have been, seeing how black and burnt his face was; "we are a match."

Everybody laughed at this, for if the joke was not a very good one it was the first the terrible Bridegroom had ever been known to make.

In high good temper the guests followed the newly-married couple as they went to sit down on the crimson chairs in front of the splendid wedding-cake that seemed fit for a king. Blue Beard cut a slice, then all the company remained with their mouths open and heads thrown back; for out of the cake, with the flapping of wings and with twittering and singing, a number of little birds came flying up. They perched upon Blue Beard's head and on his shoulders and sang:

Cheep, cheep, cheep,
Pick and flutter on high,
Catch a wriggling red worm,
An earwig and a fly.
We ope our little beaks,
Catch and gobble and keep;
We are six little birds.
Cheep, cheep, cheep.

As the birds sang Dodo looked for the Babes in the Wood. They were not with the guests about the wedding-cake, nor was the Villain there either. Could he have got hold of the children in the confusion and bustle? She ran towards the door, and what was her joy! She saw them standing

there by Jack, who was holding a hand of each, and the Robin was perched on his shoulder. The Cow with the Crumpled Horn and the Bull who pulled the bell were tossing something one to the other. It was the Villain. They were having a game of battledore and shuttlecock, and the Villain was the shuttlecock which they caught on their horns. At last he lay quite limp and weak on the ground at Jack's feet with his right arm broken.

"I shall never be wicked again," he whimpered feebly.

"You will never be allowed to, you bully," cried Jack; "you used your strength to hurt little children, and now 'tis taken from you. The Babes are coming to Jackland. I shall build a house for them there, and the Robin will come too." Everybody shouted hurrah when Jack said this. He placed the Babes on the back of the Cow with the Crumpled Horn. The Man all Tattered and Torn, whose cold had got a great deal worse, led the way, sneezing as he went. The Dog, the Cat, the Rat followed the Cow, and the Fat Wife closed the procession, and they lowed, squeaked, mewed, barked, and said, "Bless you" whenever the man sneezed. Every time this happened the Babes laughed. Dodo laughed too, but she was inclined to cry as she watched them going away. She put her hand in her pocket to draw out her handkerchief. Something crept up her arm. She

thought it was a moth, but on drawing it out she found it was Tom Thumb. "Do not cry," he said in his squeaky voice. "There's the Priest all Shaven and Shorn. He will marry us. When I am your husband no one shall make you cry. I will slay with my bodkin those who make you sad."

"You silly Tom," said Dodo. "You never will remember how little you are. Ever so much too small for a husband. Dear, dear," she thought, "how shall I ever get him away?" A number of curl papers that had fallen from the head of the Bride during that terrible game of hide-and-sneak lay strewn about. Dodo picked one up. "Stay quiet a minute, Tom," she said, and Tom, to please her, remained as quiet as a toy. She wrapped him up carefully in a bit of paper, and made quite a tidy parcel of him. This she brought to Jack, saying, "Jack, here is a little parcel which, when you come to Jackland will you please to give to Red Riding Hood with my love?"

"All right," said Jack, putting it into his waistcoat pocket. "And when are you coming to Jackland?" he added, "your house with a red roof and yellow front will soon be ready." Before Dodo could answer she heard Wide Awake Princess' voice crying briskly: "One, two, three, and away—run, jump, tumble, lazy-bones."


Every one went hurrying out, pushing, jump-

ing, running. Then she heard the tinkle tinkle of golden bells. The White Horse went prancing past. How bravely he cantered along, bearing the Bride and Bridegroom on his back! It was wonderful to see what a change had come over the two. They looked quite mild and almost genial as they rode together. The guests set up a tremendous cheer as they passed.

Then the noise suddenly dropped into silence. Dodo looked round to see what had happened. Every one had gone, and she was left all alone.

CHAPTER XII.

BIG AND LITTLE PALACE.

ELL, I do think Prince Beast might have waited for me as he promised," thought Dodo. She waited at the centre door hoping he would come out, but he and the wedding party were gone; not even Puss in Boots had remembered her. She sat down to think. "Prince Beast said I must lose my way in yonder wood, and he promised to help me to lose it, but he has forgotten me." She began turning about in her head what would be the best mode of losing her way—if Mother Goose

had been there she would have told her how to do that in a minute. "Well, I shall try," thought Dodo; "it is not so difficult to lose one's way in real earnest; one has only to shut one's eyes and go anyhow." Saying this she set off at a run. She was in a wood with quiet trees and pretty shady paths bordered with wild flowers. The wood was pleasant and the paths were trim, and although she did not know where she was going to she did not feel in the least as if she had lost her way. Then she remembered what Mother Goose had told her to do to find the castle where Blue Beard's marriage was to take place. "Mother Goose is such a muddle-headed old thing she might have meant Prince Beast's palace all the time," said Dodo to herself; "yes, I was to turn once, twice, thrice." This she did carefully, then she was to jump—this was quite easy; then to tumble—she could manage this though she did not care to do it. Still tumble, tumble, tumble, she went. She was to shut her eyes also—she shut them so tight she might have been asleep; then she was to sneeze—she tried to force a sneeze but not one would come, not one. As to standing on her head, this she knew was not possible—it was all very well for Friday and the monkeya. "Perhaps after all I shall never be able to lose my way enough to find Prince Beast's palace," thought poor Dodo sadly. Still she went on, and it may be that having followed some of Mother Goose's

directions helped her, for she soon found herself in a part of the wood where there were no paths, and where the branches of the trees clasped each other so closely that she could not see the sky, and where there were thickets on every side like green walls. All of a sudden a palace rose before her, up it rose till it seemed to touch the clouds, it had round roofs, and pointed roofs, and it was white. Suddenly, as she was looking at it, it vanished, all but one round roof, then that disappeared also, and there was nothing. "How strange!" thought Dodo. "Can it be Beast's palace?" She rubbed her eyes and looked again, but no, there was nothing. She walked on, pushing her way through the shrubs. Ugh! how the thorns of the sweet-briars and blackberries scratched her; they caught her hair they thrust themselves into her eyes. Still she went on all the same. All at once she came to a hedge so thick and prickly it was like a wall of thorns, and right over the hedge there shot up to the sky a single white tower with a pointed roof. It stood there for a minute getting smaller and bigger—smaller and bigger; then it disappeared. "Well, I never knew anything so strange," thought Dodo, "never!" She walked about peering into the hedge trying to find a place to get in, but the brambles were so thick and sharp, like a wall covered with spread out claws. Can this be Prince Beast's palace?

Dodo listened and listened if she could hear the sound of anyone running about or playing on the other side, but no sound could she hear. It was all silent and still, the hedge completely shutting her out; at last she came to a part where there was an opening just wide enough for one person to push through, the brambles were broken there. She got through it as easily as through a door, and then she found herself in a pretty garden.

There were cockle-shells all round the beds, and swings under the trees with silver bells fastened to them, and up the walks tall flowers stood in a row. Inside the flowers there were faces like round rosy tarts that seemed to smile at her. Dodo thought that they were those of plump little girls, but when she came nearer she saw they were dolls' faces that could open and shut their eyes. The strangest thing of all was the palace that stood at the end of the garden. Sometimes it seemed as if it had a hundred rooms, sometimes it was no bigger than a doll's house. Sometimes it rose high as the clouds, sometimes it went bang down to the ground. Sometimes it seemed made of white marble, sometimes of thin white mist. How wonderful! thought Dodo. She walked slowly up the garden, and as she went the bells gave a faint tinkle, and the flowers gave out a puff of perfume. Could this be Prince Beast's palace? There was a fountain, and the water in it rippled softly, softly. "Oh dear! Oh dear!" thought Dodo,

"how everything seems asleep. I do not like things that seem asleep in the daytime when the sun is shining; it is just like being—"

But before she could say what it was just like being she stopped, for she saw close to the fountain the prettiest, oddest looking child lying fast asleep. His hair was all tossed, he had his night-dress on. On one side stood a lantern, on the other a dark blue bag—"Why, it gets stranger and stranger," thought Dodo. "I wonder if the little boy walks about when he is awake in his night-dress, holding his bag in one hand and his lantern in the other." She pinched his toe to make him wake up, but he never stirred. He was so fast asleep. Dodo wished very much he would awake. She gave his shoulders a little shake, but it was no use, he remained fast asleep. "Dear, dear! I never saw anyone sleep like that!" muttered Dodo; then she looked at the blue bag by the child's side. It seemed very full of something soft. She touched it with the tip of her finger. The boy jumped up, his eyes all round with anger. He looked very wild with his tossed hair and his de-open bright eyes.

"When are you going to bed? Why are you not in your night-dress?" he said, looking at Dodo from head to foot.

"In my night-dress? indeed! and in bed when it is daylight. I should be ashamed of myself," said Dodo.

"Are you a dream?" asked the boy.

"I don't know even what you mean," replied Dodo indignantly.

"I mean," said the little boy, beginning to nod, and his eyes to shut, shut. "I mean that if you are a dream, I shall put you in a cupboard,—put you in a cupboard; if you are not, you shall—you shall be-be-come"—and he fell fast asleep before finishing what he had begun to say.

"Become a dream and be put in a cupboard with the milk-jug and the bread and butter," repeated Dodo. That was a dreadful idea. She looked round at the fountain, the flowers, the swings with their silent bells, the palace growing big and little, big and little so silently. Everything seemed fast asleep, and the boy was the fastest asleep of all. She remembered that when she touched the bag he awoke with a start. So she put her hand upon it. He jumped up like a Jack in a box when the spring is touched. "When are you going to bed? Why have you not got your night-dress on?" he asked, his eyes bright as two dancing stars.

"I shall keep your bag till you tell me your name. I want to know it," said Dodo. The boy sat up wide awake, blinking his bright eyes like an angry owl in the sunlight.

"My name is Wee Willy Winkey. I always wear my night-dress. I never wear anything else, never on any account. I go to sleep during the day till eight o'clock, and then I run about all night. Give me back my bag."

"What is the name of this palace?" asked Dodo, holding the bag tighter than ever.

"It is Dream Palace, and it is my palace," answered the boy, not looking at Dodo but at his bag. "I live in it. It is mine. Sleeping Beauty gave it to me after she had slept a hundred years in it. She gave it to me because I watched over her all the time, and she gave me all her dreams besides. These are kept in the blue cupboards. They are for the very good children. They make dreams in the palace all day long, and at eight o'clock I set out and bring them to the children. The dreams are packed in the bag; good dreams for the good children, bad dreams for the naughty children, and some children have no dreams at all. I'm sorry for them. Give me back my bag now."

"Not till you tell me where is Prince Beast's palace," said Dodo.

"It is quite close, you will see it from the windows of Dream Palace if you go in," said Wee Willy Winkey; "I go there every night." Dodo gave him his bag, which he put under his head, making a pillow of it, and before Dodo could draw her breath to ask another question he was fast—fast asleep.

"Of course I shall go in and find out Prince Beast's palace," said Dodo, jumping up.

At that moment Dream Palace was no bigger than Tom Thumb's house. Dodo might have taken it up with her hand. Its round roof was

the size of a walnut shell. The next moment it was rising and growing wider—wider—till bang! it seemed to reach the clouds, and the queen and all her ladies might walk about inside it. Dodo did not wait another minute. She dashed in. She found herself in the room with the round roof. It was full of odd-looking men with jovial red faces, and wearing big brown cloaks. They were very like small Father Christmases. Some were busy dragging in a lot of dolls—splendid dolls—with eyelids that went up and down. One doll had on an enormous jelly-shape on her head, and in her hand a huge sugar stick. Other little men polished up watches that did not go, and filled with toys and candies stockings that had feet big enough to fit a giant; others went on taking out of a hen-coop Easter eggs that hens were busy laying—blue, pink, white sugar eggs with toys inside them.

After Dodo had watched them some time she looked round the room. Right over the door leading out of it she saw written in letters that went up and down, topsy-turvy, and grew big and little just as the palace had done, "Greedy Children's Nightmares." "I must go and see how nightmares are made," she said, and she made her way to the threshold of nightmare-room. It was full of black children and red lobsters. They, too, were hard at work. Some were taking pieces of plum-pudding, kneading them very hard, shaping them

into a face. They made two holes for the eyes, which they filled with red comfits. They put a long yellow sugar stick for a nose, then they made a straight slip across for the mouth, and stuck into it two rows of big white almonds for teeth, they lit the face all round with pale-blue flames. It was a dreadful face—that of an awful old woman, with her hair on fire. When it was finished the black children and the red lobsters joined hands and claws and capered round it. They were delighted with their work. Out of an immense bit of gingerbread they then made a cat. They stuck two oranges for the eyes, a squashed bun was the nose, two crackers stuck out on either side for his moustache, and a long bit of chocolate formed his tail.

"Dear, dear," said Dodo, "it is a great deal more amusing to make nightmares than to have them." She would have liked to join the black children and the red lobsters but she was in a hurry to see Prince Beast's palace. So she thought she would just take a peep into the next room over which was written "Baby Nightmares." An ugly old woman with a mob-cap over her pinched face was in it alone. She was making up doses of Gregory's powders and preparing medicine with no jam at all. There were baths and round sponges for cold dips, and all over the room the alphabet was walking about. A, B, C making horrible contortions, bumping against each other and getting

entangled. Z was always putting out his top line like a horn and catching at every letter that came in his way. V and W were like tweezers viciously pinching every vowel they could lay hold of. As to S, it wriggled sometimes slowly like a fat lazy serpent, sometimes it was zigzagging all over the place like a mad adder—ugh! it was not at all a nice room to be in, and Dodo went out of it very quickly. She came to a silent empty corridor, at the end of which she perceived a room with a blue door, and in twinkling letters there was written over it "Beauty's Dreams." "I do wonder what these dreams are like!" muttered Dodo.

She opened the blue door and found herself in an empty room full of cupboards. These cupboards were blue like the door, and there were tiny golden keys in them. Dodo waited a little to see if anything would happen, but as nothing did happen she thought she would take a peep. She pulled a golden key gently out and looked through the hole. It appeared very bright inside, but she could see nothing distinctly; only a great many colours, like those of a wonderful kaleidoscope, melting into each other and falling into all sorts of shapes. It could do no harm to open the cupboard a little, thought Dodo, so she put the key into the lock and gently turned it.

There came a noise like the bang of a cannon going off close to her ear. She had opened the cupboard door, and higgledy piggledy out the

dreams were flying—green dreams, blue dreams, white dreams, yellow dreams, pelting past Dodo, and the light playing about them. Running down the garden-path, Dodo saw Beauty coming with fluttering skirts holding a mirror in her hand. Prince Beast was with her. Dodo tried to run towards them, and to make her way through the dreams that went dazzling past her. Suddenly there came another crash, and Dodo felt herself sent up,—up into the air like a ball. She thought she would never stop rising. Presently she found herself coming as quickly down. She now thought she would never stop falling. All at once she stopped, and found herself sitting in the same spot she had been sitting in before going off on her journey.

The cupboard door was open, showing all the glittering things and the broken toys. Her picture-books were lying open spread on the floor. Pussy, who had been in her lap, was just jumping out of it, and the carriage was rolling up to the door with a great clatter, and an odour of warm milk and bread and butter streamed in as Nurse brought in her tea. Just behind her came in Dodo's father and mother. Pussy went to meet them with a mew, his tail standing up straight, looking exactly as if nothing had happened.

"Oh! mamma, mamma!" cried Dodo jumping up, and rubbing her eyes, that were still dazzled by

the rush of Beauty's dreams past her. "I nearly had the mirror—I nearly had the mirror."

"What mirror?" asked her mother.

Dodo was just going to tell when she caught Pussy's eyes fixed upon her—his round, yellow, green eyes with the big black pupil in each—and as she looked at him he winked, and she stopped short, for that wink said plainly, "Don't say a word about it."

"What have you been doing, Mrs. Wishing-to-be, since we left you?" asked her father laughing. "Have you been longing to be a pigeon, to be shot and put into a pie, or have you dreamt you were the frog who went a wooing and was swallowed by a lily-white duck."

"I have not been dreaming at all," said Dodo indignantly. "It was all true what I saw. Oh! mamma, mamma!" she cried, and putting her arms round her mother's neck. "I shall never—never—wish to go away from you, or be anything but your little daughter, but I nearly had the mirror—I nearly had it."

"Why, what has happened to my small maid," said her mother stroking Dodo's hair, and looking full into her blue eyes, that seemed all alight with some wonderful fancy.

Dodo did not tell the story of those extraordinary adventures. Perhaps she thought no one would believe them, so for a long time they remained a secret between her and Pussy.

WILLY AND MARY IN SEARCH OF FAIRYLAND.

CHAPTER I.

WILLY AND MARY IN THEIR NURSERY.

"Tis the witching hour of night,
Orb'd is the moon and bright,
And the stars they glisten, glisten,
Seeming with bright eyes to listen—
For what listen they!

"Moon, keep wide thy golden ears . . .
Hearken, stars! and hearken, spheres! . . .
Listen, listen, listen, listen,
Glisten, glisten, glisten, glisten,
And hear my lullaby."—*Keats.*



NCE upon a time there were a little boy and a little girl, whose names were Willy and Mary, who in the summer-time lived in a pretty house close to a great forest that stretched miles and miles away.

One day they had been very good, so Nurse, after she put them to bed, sat between their two cots and read them a fairy tale.

It was such a pretty story she read; all about a little boy who was taken to Fairyland by the elves. It described what a beautiful land Fairy-

land was: how full of leaves were the trees all the year round, how delicious were the fruit and flowers that always grew. There were mountains of gold and precious stones, cakes and sweetmeats without end; and the story told how the fairies made the little boy their king and became his humble slaves, doing all he bid them.

When Nurse had finished reading this story she tucked the children well up in their beds, and, giving them each a kiss she told them to go to sleep while she was having her supper.

What a pretty nursery was the room where the children's beds stood side by side! The paper was bright with nosegays of painted flowers. Over Mary's bed was a picture of four dicky-birds with feathers blue, red, and green. Over Willy's bed was a picture of a lion with a flowing mane. He had nailed it up there himself the other day. Between the two cots was a beautiful plaster angel with clasped hands, who seemed always to be praying God to bless the children. On the mantelpiece stood a cast of the infant Samuel, also saying his prayers with uplifted eyes; and over the chimney was a picture copied by the children's aunt from a great artist's painting. It was the picture of five baby faces, singing open-mouthed, the golden light of heaven shining down on them. Willy and Mary were very fond of looking at this picture. Their mother told them it was the likeness of a little girl who was dead. The five faces

were the same little face differently turned, singing God's praises in heaven with the angels.

There were other pictures in the room. Two pretty landscapes, where the sky was blue, and where there were tall trees, and clear water reflecting the sky, the trees, and the flowers that grew on the banks. There were pictures also of animals—lions, tigers, an elephant with a big trunk, and a kitten putting his paw into a bowl of milk. You see what a pretty nursery it was!

At the other end of the room was Nurse's big bed, and near it was a cot smaller than either Willy's or Mary's. There baby slept—fat rosy baby, who I must tell you was just a year and a half old.

The lamp-light flickered in a corner by itself. The shutter was not so tall as the window, the upper panes were not covered, and through them the full moon shone in. How bright it was! It shone on the landscapes—on the five baby faces singing in heaven; it glistened on the children's white beds. Near the moonbeam the flicker of the night-lamp looked very shabby.

After Nurse left them Willy and Mary lay very quiet, but their eyes were wide open. They were thinking of the story they had just heard.

Presently Mary lifted her head from her pillow.

"Willy, are you asleep?" she whispered.

"No, but I thought you were. I'm thinking of the fairies," replied Willy.

"So am I," said Mary, sitting up, and Willy could see her quite distinctly, with her golden hair streaming down her back over her white night-gown.

"Do you know, Polly, I saw a fairy-fish to-day," he said.

"A fairy-fish!" said Mary very slowly, opening her eyes very round; "did you? But—but," she went on more and more slowly, "don't you remember mamma said the other day that there are no fairies now?"

"Yes, I remember," said Willy, coming to a standstill, for he knew mamma was always right. Then, after a minute's pause, during which Mary was looking at him anxiously, he settled it all to his own satisfaction. "Mamma said so, I remember; but that's because she's grown up. Fairies never show themselves to grown-up people, and I tell you I saw a fairy-fish to-day."

"Did you really?" cried little Mary, clapping her hands; "where was it—in the wood where we go with Nurse?"

"What a ninny you are!" said Willy in a superior tone, struggling up on his elbow and throwing one leg out of bed. "Nurse only goes to the entrance of the wood, and they live deep, deep away inside it. Nurse would frighten them away, too, with her cap under her hat, and always calling out, never letting me alone. The fairies never come out to see grown-up people. If you

want to see them you must come with me all alone. I know where they are'

"Where?" asked Mary in another whisper. Her eyes were round like saucers with wonder at what Willy said.

"You've never been there. But I went in the trap to-day with Uncle Hugh and papa, to see them trout-fishing. We had to drive ever so far in the wood. We had a jolly time I can tell you. We had lunch by the stream, and as I was sitting there, close to the edge, I saw a fish that was made of gold, and on his head there was something that shone like a crown."

"What did it do?" cried Mary, who was standing up on her pink feet. "Did it speak to you?"

"No," said Willy, "but it looked at me. I saw it as well as I see you, and it *had* a gold crown on its head. It looked at me, and it opened its mouth. I know it was going to talk. Papa called out just then, so it saw there were grown-up people, and it swam away quickly, but its tail curled up, and I tell you it beckoned to me three times."

"Oh! were you frightened, Willy?" asked Mary, whose eyes kept getting rounder and rounder with wonder every minute.

"No; I'm not a girl," replied Willy disdainfully. "But, if you'll come to-morrow, Polly, before anyone is awake, we'll go there and wait

all day; and in the night, you know, when the moon is up the fairies will come."

"Perhaps they'll ride on the fish," said Mary, skipping about her bed with delight at the thought.

"No," answered Willy, standing up, and speaking as if he knew all about it. "We shall have to sit on the back of the fish. I'll go first and hold on to his crown, and you'll get behind me and hold on to me, for you will be frightened, and it'll take us down—down—down to the bottom of the stream, where the fairies live. Hurrah!" and Willy kicked up his heels. "We'll be there a hundred years. No one will know us when we come up again. They'll be all dead and gone most likely."

"Not mamma!" cried Mary, stopping short. "Oh, Willy, how can you say such wicked things? Mamma, papa, baby, and nurse must not die. No, I won't go—I won't go away for a hundred years from mamma."

And then little Mary lay down again, and began to cry at the thought of leaving her dear mamma.

"Don't be a ninny!" said Willy, sitting down. "First thing I do, when I become king of the fairies, is to send a fairy off to get papa, mamma, and baby too, and nurse, if she promises not to scold, and to let me eat what I like, and blow my trumpet, and not try to make me a Molly Colly like herself."

"But I thought you said fairies did not like grown-up people?" answered Mary, beginning to wipe her tears away.

"I'll not mind what they like. I'll make them obey me," replied Willy, who already felt as if he were king of Fairyland. "You'll have rabbits and kittens—"

"And dicky-birds," said Mary.

"And everything you want," replied Willy; "and now will you come, or must I go alone?"

"I'll come," said Mary, "if mamma, papa, and baby, and nurse can come."

"I tell you they can all come," answered Willy. "We'll fetch them one night, when they are crying, thinking we are dead. We'll have our crowns on. Won't they stare! Hurrah!" and this time he jumped so heavily on his bed that Nurse, who was two rooms off, having a friend to supper, and who was just sipping a glass of beer, put it down and listened, saying:

"I fancied I heard that naughty boy up to some mischief in the nursery."

"He's quiet enough now," said her friend, who did not like to be disturbed at meals.

"Well, I'll look in as soon as we've had another bit of bread and cheese and sip of beer. As you say, he's quiet now," replied Nurse, beginning to eat her supper again.

When Willy gave the jump that made his bed rattle he and Mary disappeared under their blan-

kets as quickly as little frightened birds inside their nests. They tucked themselves under them and shut their eyes, trying to look as if they had been fast asleep all the time, for they felt sure Nurse would hear them and come in.

"She's not coming," at last whispered Willy, poking his nose out.

"No," said Mary, listening with one little ear above her sheet.

"Well then," said Willy in a whisper, for fear Nurse might be stealing in, "it's settled. Tomorrow, before it's light and anyone is up, we'll go away to the river and wait for the fairies there."

"Yes," replied Mary under her breath; "but oh, Bill, if we lose our way, and never find it, and get lost, and die like the babes in the wood!"

"You are such a ninny!" cried Willy, who always said this when he was angry, throwing his coverlid indignantly off his shoulders. "The boy in the *Babes in the Wood* was ever so much younger than me. I would build a hut, like Robinson Crusoe. But we won't be lost, for I know the way. It's up the path under the big oak, quite straight, until you turn to your right, and then on again till you turn, and always like that. I'll go by myself if you won't come."

"Oh, Willy, I'll come!" said Mary. "Don't go without me. Promise you'll wake me if I am asleep."

"I will," replied Willy; "if you promise not to cry like a girl."

"No, I sha'n't cry. I want to see the fairies, and I want to go with you, so you'll wake me—won't you, Willy?" said Mary again.

"Perhaps," replied Willy, "but hush now, I hear Nurse."

When Nurse came in, a minute after, Willy's eyes were so tightly shut and his breathing so deep she could not think he was awake.

But Mary's brown eyes were wide open. "You naughty giri, not to be asleep," said Nurse. "Bless me, how flushed the child's cheeks are. Gracious goodness me," she murmured, "is she going to be ill?"

"No, no, Nurse," said Mary, "I'm not going to be ill, but I do so want to give you a kiss;" and she stretched out her arms to Nurse, who let herself be hugged.

"Dear, dear, heart alive! is the child going to be ill?" said poor Nurse. "She's so loving. She's just like saying good-bye to me. I'll not frighten her mother, but I'll not go to bed to-night, but watch by her side."

"Nurse, you must go to bed!" said Willy's voice behind her.

"Lack-a-day! there's the other awake too!" cried Nurse, putting her hand up to her cap. "And there he's sitting up as brazen-faced as a lord."

"You must go to bed this minute," said Willy again. "Mary's quite well. She's only silly. We've been talking, and she's got her cheeks red, like girls do; and if you don't go to bed, I'll call mother."

"Heart alive!" cried Nurse, very angry; "did you ever hear the like of him for sauciness? I'll give you a whipping. You bold children, and that's what you have been doing, and the noise I heard was your scampering about. A mercy you did not wake the precious baby. I never heard the likes. I thought better of you, Miss Mary. And as for your calling your mother, Master Willy, you just lie down, and from here I don't stir till you're both as fast asleep as field-mice at Christmas. You naughty children. Catch me reading a fairy tale to you another night—catch me."

"We sha'n't want you to read any more fairy tales to us," said naughty Will.


"Hush! go to sleep!" said Nurse.

CHAPTER II

THE FAIRIES IN THE NURSERY.

"Where the bee sucks, there lurk I:
In a cowslip's bell I lie;
There I couch when owls do cry.
On the bat's back I do fly
After summer, merrily:
Merrily, merrily, shall I live now,
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough."

—*Shakespeare.*

HE room was so quiet now that very soon Willy went off to sleep in right earnest, and Nurse began to nod. Her head kept bobbing down lower and lower till at last it nearly bobbed down upon her knees. Then with a start she awoke and looked about her. She sat up very straight, rubbed her eyes, and yawned. She looked at Willy, and was quite sure he was asleep this time. She looked at Mary, whose eyes were shut, but she did not look at her long enough to find out she was frowning. Then Nurse gave another yawn, stretched herself, undressed, put on her night-cap, and went to bed.

Mary was not asleep. She was thinking of the fairies and of to-morrow when she and Willy would go and look for them. She was not asleep when mamma came in, half an hour after, shading

the candle with her hand, and stealing to each little bed, looked a long time at each sleeping child. She gazed at Mary, and whispered softly, "God bless my little girl!" Mary longed to open her eyes, jump up, and say, "I am awake, mamma; give me a kiss!" but she was afraid, if she did, perhaps mamma would think she was ill, as Nurse had done, and sit up all night and prevent her and Willy going to see the fairies to-morrow.

After her mamma had left the room Mary opened her eyes. She could just see the pretty landscapes at the foot of her bed, and the flowers painted on the wall over which the moonlight was shining, with the pictures of the animals and of the child's face singing up in the clouds. All the time she was listening to Nurse's solemn, slow breathing, and Willy's and baby's quick little pant that came immediately after, like the trot of two small children trying to keep pace with a grown person's walk.

After a while her eyelids grew heavy and her head giddy. Then she saw that something very strange was happening, for the four dicky-birds that were over her bed were now flying about the room. She could see their beautiful varied plumage flashing red, blue, and gold. They sang "Twit, twit, twit," and then a great many other birds answered "Twit, twit, twit," and they came flying in behind her, in front of her, on all sides. She had never seen so many lovely birds in her

life before. Presently the flowers painted on the wall grew alive; they were clusters of lilies, and roses, and other flowers that grew in the fields, but which had never been on the paper; they also began to bud out. They grew and grew, putting out leaves and then blossoms, until the room was like a garden and a meadow together. How pleasantly they smelt! Never had little Mary smelt any perfume so sweet. The lion over Will's bed shook his mane and stepped out right into the very centre of the room. The elephant lifted his trunk up high and began to stride about. The kitty jumped down, and other kittens came frisking in, white, tabby, yellow, and black kittens, playful kittens, running after balls, curving their backs; and squirrels also peeped from behind the flowers under their bushy tails. But, what was strangest of all, the lion did not seek to hurt the kittens, nor the kittens to kill the birds, nor the elephant to trample with his big feet on the smaller animals. Then Mary saw that the landscapes too on the wall were alive. The water splashed, the trees nodded, the sun shone. The little man in the boat with his oar rowed, and the boat shot through the lake. Fishes with scales like gold swam about. They put their heads out of the waves and looked at Mary, and on their heads were tiny crowns of gold. They ducked down into the water, and when they came up again they carried little girls on their backs, so pretty

and dainty. Some had wings on their shoulders, others wore pointed hats and carried silver sticks. These had such a knowing look!

They jumped off the fishes' backs and came into the room. All round Mary's bed they came. Then they joined hands and began to sing. What sweet voices they had, like silver flutes playing together! and the tune they sang was that of a ballad her mamma sometimes sang for her softly in the twilight. She could even hear some of the words quite distinctly.

"Come hither, thou darling! come, go with me!
Fine games know I, that I'll play with thee;
Flowers many and bright do my kingdoms hold;
My mother has many a robe of gold."

The little birds sang with them. The kittens said "Purr, purr;" that was their way of singing; they stood on their hind-legs and danced to the measure. The squirrels kept time with their tails, which they waved backwards and forwards. The flowers nodded in tune. The lion shook his mane, and looked like an amiable lion at her, as much as to say, "You'll find me in Fairyland, but I'm a gentle beast there, and you need not be afraid of me!" Never had Mary seen or heard anything so genial and bright.

"Yes, yes, dear fairies, I'm coming—Willy and I are coming to-morrow!" she cried aloud, and Mary sat up in her bed. She did not know if it

was her voice that had frightened away the fairies, the kittens, the squirrels, and the birds, but, lo! they had all disappeared from the room. The paper was on the wall with its gay clusters of painted flowers, but now they were flat flowers, that gave no perfume. The lion was over Willy's bed as if he had never stirred from his place. The four dicky-birds looked as if they did not know how to fly with their many-coloured wings. The landscapes and the animals were so quiet you never would have thought they had just been given the wonderful gift of life.


The night-lamp was going out; how sick and yellow was its light! The moonbeam was no longer shining through a creak in the shutter, and, instead of it, a faint white light was creeping into the nursery. Then Mary knew that morning had dawned, and that very soon the great sun would rise behind the pine-trees.

Willy was fast asleep, one arm over his head, one leg thrown outside the coverlid. Nurse and baby were also sleeping soundly.

CHAPTER III

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN WILLY OPENED THE DOOR TO FETCH HIS BOAT.

‘There’s something in a flying horse,
There’s something in a huge balloon;
But through the clouds I’ll never float
Until I have a little boat,
Whose shape is like a crescent moon.’— *Wordsworth.*

ULLO! what do you want?" cried Willy,
rubbing his eyes.

Then he sat up straight as a squirrel
when he saw it was Mary in her night-
gown who was standing pulling at his arm.

"The fairies, Willy, the fairies! Don't you re-
member we're to go and look for the fairies before
Nurse awakes?" Mary whispered.

"The fairies! O yes, I remember!" replied
Willy, putting his other leg out. "I thought I
was out rabbit-shooting with Uncle Hugh, and I
had a gun of my own."

"Willy, don't talk so loud, you'll wake Nurse,"
whispered Mary frightened; "and do you know,
Willy, do you know," she went on, coming nearer,
"the fairies came here last night. I saw them,
and the fish with the gold crown, and the dicky-
birds."

"Oh, you ninny!" interrupted Willy, "how could a fish come where there is no water, and birds where there are no trees?"

"They came from the pictures," whispered Mary again. "The fairies made the pictures alive, and the flowers grew in the room."

"Perhaps you were dreaming," said Willy doubtfully.

"I know I saw the fairies, and I heard them," replied Mary, the tears coming into her eyes because Willy did not seem to believe her. "They sang round my bed and asked me to be their queen."

"I'm to be their king though!" said Willy, "and you ought to have waked me to speak to them. Don't be a slow-coach now, and dress quickly; we must be out before papa, Nurse, or the servants wake;" and up jumped Willy out of bed.

It was astonishing to see how quickly Willy got his plump little body inside his clothes. He did not stop to wash his face or brush his hair, and did not mind his collar being all on one side, he was in such a hurry to be off. But poor little Mary could not get on at all. Nurse had always dressed her, and her clothes fastened behind. Then she did not like not to wash her face, and to leave her pretty hair all rough and tangled.

"Why, you've not begun!" cried Willy, standing before Mary, all dressed. "I'll have to go without you."

"O no, no, you must not go without me," said little Mary, "I promised the fairies to come."

"Well, then, hurry!" Willy spoke as if he were a grown man. "I'll go and fetch my boat uncle made for me last week, we'll want it in Fairyland, and you must be ready when I come back."

"I'll take kitty," said Mary, jumping on her two little feet, "there are kitties in Fairyland."

Then the two children stopped talking and stayed very quiet, for Nurse stirred in her bed.

When Nurse had gone off to sleep again, "No, you must not take kitty," said Willy. Then when he saw how disappointed Mary looked, he added, "We'll take him when we come to fetch father and mother; and now don't make a noise, for if Nurse wakes she won't let us go off. I'm going for my boat."

Willy got on tiptoe to the door, turned the handle, and the door opened with a loud creak.

"What's that?" cried Nurse, sitting bolt straight up, and putting her hands up to her night-cap. "Lawk-a-mercy! what's the matter?" and she looked, with her mouth open, first at Willy with his clothes so funnily put on and then at Mary standing in the middle of the room. "Lawk-a-mercy, well, I never!" was all she could say. Willy flung open the door and scampered out of the room down the stairs. Nurse was up in a minute, and down she scampered after him. Baby

now opened her eyes, puckered up her nose and began to cry. Mary, because she felt so disappointed at being prevented from going to see the fairies, began to cry also.

"What is the matter?" said mamma, coming into the nursery in her red dressing-gown by one door as Nurse entered by the other, carrying Willy screaming and kicking in her arms.

"I never knew the likes of it, ma'am—never!" cried Nurse, very angry. "To think of his naughtiness, getting up and dressing himself, and waking the precious baby before it's day; and Miss Mary too. Last night they were making a noise at nine o'clock. It's that fairy tale, ma'am. It has just turned their heads, ma'am, that it has."

"Willy, you naughty boy; and, Mary, naughty too," said mamma, shaking her head, and trying to look stern, but she only looked sad.

"Oh, mamma, do not be angry with me!" sobbed little Mary, running with her arms stretched out to her mother.

"Why should I not take a walk if I like?" said Willy, standing up very straight and looking very determined.

"My boy, you must learn to obey," replied mamma. "You'll never be a good man like papa, or like the men you make me read stories of to you, if you are not a good little boy first."

"He deserves a whipping, that he does," said

Nurse, "and Miss Mary too, waking the dear baby with her pranks."

"Well, Nurse, we won't give them a whipping this time," said mamma smiling, for she knew that although Nurse spoke so severely she was very soft-hearted. Nurse had always lived with her—she had been her own Nurse before she had been her children's. All those years Nurse had petted and scolded her, and sometimes she still spoke to her as if she were a wee child.

"Well, ma'am, not this time," said Nurse, "but if they're not punished they'll get worse and worse. La, ma'am, you don't know how to say a harsh word to them. And if you'll let me, ma'am, do it for their good, they'll not have an egg for breakfast this morning although it's their day for one."

It was on the tip of Willy's tongue to shout very loud, "We don't want your nasty old eggs!" but he checked himself, remembering what mamma had just said. He wished very much when he grew up to be a great man, doing noble actions, such as the men mamma read of to him in books, but until he grew up to be a man he did not mind being a naughty little boy.

"Very well, Nurse," said mamma, "as it is for their good Willy and Mary shall have no egg for breakfast, and they must remember it's for their good. Now go to bed until Nurse is ready for you." And mamma kissed her little ones and went away.

Poor Nurse could not go to sleep again although it was so early, for baby was as wide awake as the birds on the trees outside. She chirped and talked away in a language no one understood but herself. Perhaps it was the language of Fairyland. And every time Nurse shut her eyes she poked her fat little fingers inside her eyelids, and cried, "Opie eyes, Nussie." So after grumbling a good deal Nurse got up.

As soon as she went out of the room to prepare their bath Willy whispered, "I say, Polly, when we're in the wood this afternoon and Nurse is not minding us we'll run away to the river."

"Nurse will look at us all the time," replied Mary sadly. "She won't let us go to the fairies now."

Willy did not lose heart so soon. "I tell you, Polly, we'll run away to-day to Fairyland. I know Nurse does not look round when baby's gone to sleep and she's talking to the other nurses. I'll watch and when I give you a nod you just take hold of my hand, and we'll run—run." And Willy swung his arms and kicked his heels to show how fast they would run. "We'll be ever so far before she knows we're gone, and we'll keep away from the path, so they'll never find us."

"Oh, Willy! I'll be so glad to see the fairies," said Mary. "I'll look at you all the time to see you nod."

"All right," cried Willy, "we'll run away this

afternoon;" and he turned head over heels in his bed, and forgot all about the morning's disappointment.

CHAPTER IV.

WILLY AND MARY AND THEIR OLD MASTER.

"And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew
That one small head could carry all he knew."—*Goldsmith.*



SUNDAYS and Thursdays were called "egg-days" by Willy and Mary, for on those days they had each an egg for breakfast. It was the pretty hens in the yard that laid the nice warm eggs that Betsy took out of the hen-coop, and, to tell you the truth, the children always looked forward to their Sunday and Thursday breakfast. To-day was Thursday, but to-day at the nursery table there only stood one egg—a warm oval egg, whose shell was of a delicate cream colour. It stood in an egg-cup on which was painted a garland of roses. By its side were dainty morsels of bread and butter ready to dip into the golden yolk. This was baby's breakfast, standing before baby's high chair. Before Willy's and Mary's were two plates of porridge and two mugs of milk.

I told you that baby had a language of her own which nobody understood. Her mamma thought

it was the language of heaven, where dwell the little ones Christ took in His arms.

Out of this jumble, however, some world's-words were beginning to be formed by baby. When baby got an idea into her head that she could express by the world's-words she knew, she repeated it a great many times over and over again. This morning when she saw she had an egg, and that Willy and Mary had none, she at once guessed how matters stood. "Baby good. Baby egg," she said to Nurse. Then pointing with her fat hand to Willy's and Mary's plates she cried, "Naughty boy no egg. Naughty girl no egg." And every time she looked at them she extended her hand in the direction of their porridge and repeated the same words.

But Willy and Mary did not care for baby's jeers this morning. All breakfast-time they were thinking of the eggs they would have in Fairyland. Not two a week but one every day, and such delicious eggs, twice as big and as good as the one baby was eating!

Nurse was so pleased when she saw the children taking their punishment so well that she patted their heads and said, "Next Sunday will be here soon and then you'll have a nice egg apiece."

Willy and Mary did not answer, but they looked at each other, as much as to say, "Next Sunday we'll be in Fairyland and we'll have fairy eggs for breakfast!"

That morning their geography master came to give Willy and Mary a lesson. He was a nice old gentleman who wore a big pair of spectacles. Willy and Mary liked him, for he had such a pleasant way of teaching. He would tell them stories of the countries they had never seen, and Mary often thought she was listening to a fairy tale instead of to the truth. "This is the North Pole," he would say pointing up to the top of the map. "Oh, how cold it is! There is nothing but ice there, huge blocks of ice, ten times as high as this house. It is an ice world, white like a Christmas-cake. There the white bear lives and the seals in their comfortable fur coats. The sun shines up there only for a few weeks in the year, but then he makes up for his long absence by shining all the night as well as all the day. Then the white world grows rosy and golden and blue, it is so joyful at the sun's coming. But there is something that could tell you a great deal more about this part of the world than I can. That is the pole-star, that is always keeping its patient, faithful watch over the white world when the sun is gone away." A great many more wonderful things about the North Pole did the old gentleman tell Willy and Mary.

To-day he pointed with his finger to the centre of the globe. "This is the equator," but in nature it is not a black ugly line like that, it is a golden line of sunshine. And some way above and below

it are the tropics. Ah! how beautiful they are, I could not tell you. The trees are so tall there, with great leaves and blossoms always growing on them. Clusters of delicious fruit hang in the hedges, and little children may pluck them as they pass. How juicy they are, never have you tasted anything so sweet! And the wild flowers that grow there are more splendid than the flowers we rear in our conservatories. And the birds—how brilliant they are! Their wings twinkle like precious stones, their little throats shine like glowworms at night up in the forest trees. There the sea and the sky are always blue, there is no winter, no ice or snow, but the dear sun always shines, and at night the stars are so big and brilliant up in the heavens that it never seems dark but always day." The old gentleman was going to tell of the serpents and tigers that live in the forests, but Mary's eyes looked so bright as he spoke to her of the tropics that he did not like to bring a shadow into them.

"Little girl, what is the name of that beautiful land?" he asked, quite sure Mary would remember it.

"Fairyland!" she answered, clapping her hands; "and we are—" but Willy gave her such a nudge with his elbow that she stopped. Willy knew she was going to say, "We are going there this afternoon;" and if she had she would have let the cat out of the bag

"Have they been good children?" asked mamma, coming into the room, as the old gentleman was rubbing his hands and laughing over Mary's answer.

"O yes, very! Little Mary has just called the tropics Fairyland, and she's not far wrong—she's not far wrong," said the kind teacher bobbing his head up and down.

"Bless their little hearts!" said Nurse, who came in behind mamma, "their heads are full of Fairyland; but after dinner we're going to the entrance of the woods, and the wind will blow those thoughts away."

"Yes, the wind will blow the thoughts away," shouted Willy over the balustrade. He was so pleased at going to the wood that as he scampered upstairs he took two steps at a time.

"Oh, baby, we're going to Fairyland," whispered little Mary very low to baby up in the nursery, "and you are to come too, for we shall send for you."

"Dear mamey, good-bye! you'll come when we send!" and Mary hugged her mamma, who stood at the garden-gate to see the last of her little ones as they set off for the wood. Mamma did not hear what Mary said, but she thought her little girl had never given her so sweet a kiss. "God bless my children," she prayed in her heart, "and keep them safe!"

CHAPTER V

WILLY AND MARY IN THE WOOD.

"But the wood all close and clenching
Bough in bough and root in root,—
No more sky (for over-branching)
At your head than at your foot.

Oh, the wood drew me within it by a glamour past dispute."

—*Elizabeth Barrett Browning.*



THEY all set off together. Baby in the perambulator, Nurse pushing it, and Willy and Mary walking hand-in-hand in front. Willy had taken his boat under his arm. "You silly boy," said Nurse, "what do you want with your boat? There's no water in the wood to sail it in." But Willy only clutched it tighter and laughed to himself.

"Look here what I've got!" he whispered to Mary slapping his hand on his pocket; and Mary saw it was full of bread, and he had stowed away also inside it the large bit of cake mamma had given each of them after dinner.

"But the fairies will feed us," said Mary.

"We may be hungry before we get there," answered far-seeing Willy.

It was such a beautiful day in early September. The hot sun shone down on the road on the pretty flowers in the gardens, but under the

trees it was delightfully cool. How pleasant it was here at the entrance of the shady, shady wood! The odour of the heather was so sweet and pungent. The great trees made such music when the breeze passed over them. The rustling of the leaves against each other was like the patter of tiny feet running, and when the big branches swayed backwards and forwards the sound they made was like that of grown-up people talking wisely as the children play about them. How pleasant it was here just at the entrance of the wood! How much pleasanter and more beautiful it would be far away in the depth of the forest where the fairies dwell! That was what little Mary and Willy thought.

"Now you must be good children and play about here and not go out of sight; and you must not walk in the brushwood, for there are snakes there and all sorts of ugly creeping things," said Nurse. Then having said this she sat down under an oak-tree, and presently another nurse carrying a baby joined her and sat down beside her. They took out their work and looked so cosy sitting there chatting in the shade.

"Can we go now?" whispered Mary.

"No, she's looking about her still. Let us wait till baby goes to sleep," answered Willy.

Baby was rubbing her eyes, and giving a little sleepy cry, very soon; so Nurse made a pillow of a cloak for her head, and baby fell asleep as

coolly as if she were in her crib in the nursery. Then the two nurses drew closer together and talked in whispers.

"Let's run now," said Willy holding tight Mary's hand. And away they ran—over the heather, over gnarled trunks of trees, under the ferns, through the brambles and the blackberry bushes, across a ditch where a frog was croaking all by itself. Their nimble little feet scarce touched the ground. They never stopped until at last Mary fell down quite out of breath.

Then the children saw they were in the middle of a green pathless world. They were under the ferns. The ferns were so tall that they were hidden under them. Never had they seen such a sight, and how silent it was!

"Let us run farther!" said Willy after a minute. And away they ran again, their stout legs carrying them far, far away until they could run no more.

Then they sat down and began to look about them. The high trees were joining their branches above them; they had only peeps of the blue sky. They could not see the sun but through the leaves; it sent down round spots of light that fell on Mary's pink dress, on the trunks of the trees, all over the ferns and the ground—it was just like sitting in the midst of a shower of drops of light. There the children sat in the deep, deep wood, far out of reach of anyone they

loved or who loved them. On the ground last year's dead leaves lay thick; some were shining like bits of gold—some were deep brown; over them waved the ferns, and fresh green moss grew up between. There was also the beautiful pink heather, some purple, some like pale wax; never had they seen anything more beautiful. And how sweet it smelt, with the odour of the pine-trees and the wild flowers coming in warm puffs to their noses. They were so tired by the hot sun they thought they would rest awhile.

Not a human being was to be seen or heard. They were all alone in the wood. There was plenty of sound, however, and plenty of stirring about. First a big wild bee buzzed past. "Buzz-uzz-uzz!" So sleepy was the sound you would have thought he had nothing to do but buzz all his life. But presently he got in the heather and the buzz stopped; he bent his body in two, and there was but one thought in his head—that of making honey. Then there came a droning fly who surely had nothing to do but to drone; and a great many other insects besides buzzed, hummed, and whizzed all round. All the time a wood-pigeon was cooing to himself: "Coo, coo!" was all his song. He had but these two notes in his voice. It was wonderful all he managed to express by them. "Coo, coo!" he repeated in a rich contented gurgle, that said distinctly, "How pleasant it is here up in the green tree! How

comfortable is the sunshine on my back! How delicious is the stirring breeze and the smell of the wood it brings! Coo, coo! How pleasant is life in the summer!"

He was almost the only bird who expressed his satisfaction, for the others and the grasshoppers were waiting for the hot sun to go down before they began to sing.

But there were other sounds besides the hum of the insects and the cooing of the wood-pigeon. Strange noises that frightened the children. Sometimes the dead leaves crackled, the ferns stirred, as if some one was walking softly stealing up behind them. Willy and Mary jumped up, looked around them, but no one was near. Far, far as they could see there were only ferns, and heather, and trees waving and nodding their green heads to them and to each other. The children sat down again and once more it came, that strange sound, as of a quick gliding footstep close behind them. They scarcely dared to look round, but they drew closer to one another and gave one timid glance back, still there was nothing, only the ferns and the green leaves and heather sprinkled over with spots of light.

"It's the fairies," whispered Mary, nestling nearer still to Willy; "we cannot see them in the daylight, we can only hear them walking about."

Just as she said this the branches of the oak-tree above them rustled angrily, and two large

acorns were thrown down sharply on her head.

This time Willy and Mary were so frightened they dared not look up, they felt sure they had offended the fairies. The branches now rustled louder and louder, there was a hurry-scurry amongst them. The children took heart to look up. And what do you think they saw? Peering down at them out of the leaves, they saw a pair of wide-awake mischievous black eyes, surmounted by two furry quivering ears, over which waved a beautiful tail like a plume.

"It's a squirrel!" shouted Willy.

"Pretty squirrel!" called Mary in her softest voice, "pretty squirrel, come down!"

But the squirrel only climbed higher and higher when they called to him, jumping from branch to branch. How lightly he jumped! How nimbly he climbed! His fur glowed like ruddy gold, his tail stood upright. Sometimes he paused and he looked down at the children, his head on one side, his ears and tail wagging. He seemed to say, "Am I not an agile fellow? I know you admire me. I don't mind our looking at each other with the length of this tall tree between us."

"Look, look, there's his nest!" said Willy.

Up high where two branches forked out Mary could just see such a cosy nest made of small twigs of wood and moss. The wary squirrel to keep out the wet had constructed a little shelv-

ing roof over it, leaving an opening large enough for him to go in and out comfortably.

The children began to dance and to laugh; they did not feel so lonely or frightened with the squirrel capering about and watching them.

"Come here!" cried Willy, who had gone a few steps off. "Just look at that little ant carrying off a wasp. Does he not kick!"

Mary ran to look. The ground there was covered with ants—it was impossible to count them there was such a number. Large black ants, running backwards and forwards in all directions, bent upon business evidently of the highest importance. Perhaps they were building a town in the great ant kingdom, a little way under the earth, and storing it with provisions against the coming winter. Perhaps they were preparing to go to war with a neighbouring tribe of ants living a few yards off who had invaded their territory. Some were carrying bits of pinecones; some were dragging lumps of earth or sparkling sand; some were carrying nothing at all, yet these seemed the busiest of all. So continually they ran about from side to side, so important they looked, they were evidently the overseers carrying messages to and from headquarters and seeing that every ant was doing his duty. One ant was carrying a wasp. It was a sight to see the brave little fellow tottering under the weight. The wasp would have made

a dozen ants, and he kicked angrily with all his legs at a time. No wonder he was indignant. He, such a grand yellow-streaked creature, held a prisoner by this diminutive black insect. His wrath made it more difficult for the ant to hold him. So he went on slowly with great difficulty. Once they toppled over together.

"He's lost him," cried Willy who was nearly breathless with excitement; "no, no; hurrah! he's up again holding him still."

The ant had struggled to his feet and was now continuing his march without having loosened his hold of his prisoner. The other ants especially the overseers sometimes came and sniffed contemptuously at the wasp. They seemed to say, "What a big fellow you are, but there is more wit in our little bodies than in your lubberly size!" That is all they did. They gave no help to carry him off. Willy was so intent upon watching that he forgot Fairyland. Mary watched also until two little field-mice crept out of the ferns and looked at her with their shy brown eyes. She remained very quiet for she knew if she moved they would scamper away. The mice seeing her so still began to nibble at some grass in a friendly manner. The squirrel watched from his tree, holding his tail over his head like a parasol. Presently a grey rabbit hobbled out, squatted down on his hind-legs and looked at Mary from under a pair of limp ears.

"Bunny! bunny!" cried the little girl stretching out her fat arms.

Away scampered the mice. Away hobbled the rabbit as quick as his short forelegs and long hind ones could carry him. The squirrel rustled the branches angrily. "Silly little girl! silly little girl," he seemed to say. "Don't talk, we don't understand your language. When you keep silent we like to look at your pretty face."

"I say, we'll never reach the river where the fairies live if we go loitering like this," said Willy, who had not thought of the fairies all the time he was watching the ant. But now the wasp had been dragged off to where Willy could not see it—down, down into some prison in ant-land to be made a slave of, perhaps. So the two children set off once more. And as they walked the wood grew dimmer and dimmer; it was like being in a beautiful church with green-stained windows on every side and the tall white trunks of the silver beeches for the pillars. The ground was covered with flowers; on the blackberry bushes the fruit hung, some glossy black, some scarlet still, mingled with pale blossoms like stars. The sun was going down and the birds ruffled their feathers and began to chirp. First one called and another answered. Then a blackbird gave out his rich, comfortable note, and a thrush burst into song. Birds with blue wings flew past. The rooks cawed high, high above. A robin-red-

breast perched himself on a honeysuckle bush and did not fly away when Mary came near. She jumped for joy.

"I wonder if Fairyland will be more beautiful than this?" she said.

"It will be a hundred times more beautiful—the fruit and the flowers will be made of gold," answered Willy.

"But I like these flowers best," said Mary, "they smell so sweet. Look what a beautiful nosegay I am making!"

I could not tell you all the wild flowers she had plucked and which she held tightly in her two hands. There were shining buttercups, and daisies made of silver with an eye grown golden from love of the sun; there were tall foxgloves, scarlet berries of the deadly nightshade glowing in glossy dark leaves, traveller's-joy like balls of down pelted by the fairies at each other, and harebells for the elves to pull ding-dong in the moonlight; heather and ragged-robins with shaggy rosy faces, pretty speedwells looking out with their friendly blue eyes, and a great many other flowers besides. Never had little Mary gathered such quantities of them. What a lovely nosegay, it was so bright in colour, so sweet in perfume. She had plucked mushrooms also; some were stained with red like drops of blood, others were scooped out and hollow. They looked like fairy cups, as if the fairies had had a picnic in

the woods and had left their goblets behind them.

As Mary ran in and out gathering her flowers the wood-pigeon crooned in two notes, the birds chirped and flew over her head, the rooks cawed and flew about. For busy birds there never were such chatterers. Sometimes a hare ran across the path, sometimes a rabbit peeped at her from under the ferns. The pheasants stirred through the dead leaves. Once also in the distance the children saw a beautiful animal with slender legs and soft brown eyes. He carried his head proudly, and on it grew branches as of a forest tree.

"It's a deer: I wish I had a gun!" cried Willy. The deer seemed to hear him although so far away. He stopped, looked in the direction of the children, and then disappeared with a stately motion.

Mary thought it would be very pleasant to live always in the wood; she forgot her dream of last night as she plucked the flowers.

"Willy, do you think we could build a hut like Robinson Crusoe and live here always, and fetch mamma and baby, and Nurse, and papa?"

"I'm going to the fairies' land," said Willy resolutely; "it will be better than this. I'll have a gun to myself."

"Yes, the dicky-birds will come when I call them, and the bunnies and squirrels will not run away. O yes, Fairyland will be better, but I should like to live here too."

Just as little Mary said this there came a noise which made her start, it was so loud and sharp. It was the report of a gun not far off, and that minute a beautiful pheasant with golden wings and a purple breast fell heavily down a little distance off. There was a rush among the birds and animals. The hares and rabbits hid themselves, the field-mice disappeared in their holes underground, the birds hushed their song, even the crows and the wood-pigeons were silent. Willy and Mary hid themselves behind a tree, for they were frightened, like all the creatures in the wood, at the sound of the gun that had killed the beautiful innocent pheasant. As they were hiding they spied a man stealing through the ferns. Mary could not see his face, but she saw that he had a big red beard and a ragged coat. He was very tall and he walked quickly. He, looking cautiously about him, approached the dead pheasant, took it up, stowed it inside a bag hidden under his coat, and disappeared.

"Was he a giant?" whispered Mary.

"No, you ninny; he's not much taller than Uncle Hugh. If he had been a giant I'd have gone up a tree, carrying a big stone with me, and I'd have thrown it down on his head and killed him," said Willy.

Mary was very glad, if that was the case, the man was not a giant. It was quite bad enough that the pretty pheasant should be killed in the

happy wood, and that the flowers should be stained with blood.

"Was he a robber?" she asked, beginning to tremble.

"I think he was Robin Hood," said Willy, who knew all about Robin Hood through Uncle Hugh. "No, he can't be, for Robin Hood wore a green coat and had a silver bugle. But perhaps he was one of his men. If we meet him again I'll ask him if he knows Robin Hood. If he does I'll go with him. I don't want to go to Fairyland. I'd rather live with Robin Hood, and have a bow and arrow, and kill the deer and be an outlaw."

Mary's eyes grew round with dismay and her lips began to quiver.

"Oh, Willy! I don't want to go with that wicked man, nor to Robin Hood," she said.

"That's because you're a girl!" replied Willy, "and are afraid. I am not. I'd like to be out all day and night with my bow and arrows, sometimes killing the wild beasts—sometimes—"

But something happened just then that put all Willy's brave thoughts out of his head. First they heard a swift noise, a rustling through the brushwood, the ferns moved, and undulating his body and crawling out, they saw a black snake. How wicked he looked, how fast he came! Willy forgot all he meant to do, how he would slay the giant with a big stone and live with Robin Hood, killing the wild beasts; he took hold

of Mary's hand and away the two children ran, their legs made very nimble by fear.

"Caw, caw!" cried the rooks overhead. "You'll fall—take care—you have not got wings as we have—take care;" for the rooks are very prudent birds.

"Coo, coo!" crooned the wood-pigeon. "How pleasant it is up here in the green tree! Why do people live on the earth, where there are snakes and guns?"

The birds twittered as the children passed. "Twit, twit! Wait and I'll lend you my wings," said kind robin-redbreast, but they did not understand him, and were too frightened to stop and ask him his meaning. The hares, the rabbits, the field-mice, the deer, seeing the children run bounded along too. Everything seemed running. The trees waved their branches, the breeze fluttered past them, and it ran the swiftest, outrunning them all.

CHAPTER VI.

WILLY AND MARY REACH THE FAIRY STREAM.

"Here, in cool grot and mossy cell,
We rural fays and fairies dwell;
Though rarely seen by mortal eye,
When the pale moon, ascending high,
Darts through yon limes her quivering beams,
We frisk it, near those crystal streams."—*Shenstone*.



WHEN Willy and Mary could run no more they stopped, and they saw they had left the black wicked snake far away behind. They could now hear the bubbling of a merry brook; it was hurrying towards a larger stream, which, a little way off, they saw shining like silver, for the sky was bright with the colours of the clouds gathering on every side to see the great sun setting, after having blessed the earth all day with his light. Rushes were growing on the banks of the stream; they nodded to their brown reflections; and there were patches of blue made by the pretty appealing eyes of the forget-me-nots. Grey stones, on which grew grasses and feathery ferns, stood out in the water. The stream sung loud when it came close to these rocks, "You'll not prevent me reaching the river,—the swift large river that will bear me to the sea—the blue sea that is for ever . . . ever calling

to me." Thus the stream sang; and the little brook, pattering over its own tiny rocks, cried, "I'm coming too!" and on it came, gurgling, rippling, laughing to the broad stream.

"Pretty stream!" cried Mary running forward. "It's here the fairies live!" and she jumped up and down with delight.

"Yes, it's here!" said Willy. "We'll stop here, and when the moon rises they'll come—hurrah! I'll sail my boat till then;" and he jumped up on one of the rocks.

How beautiful was this living stream in the heart of the mighty forest! On the other side, where the water seemed fast asleep, lay wide glossy leaves like green platters, and amongst them shone lily-cups for the guardian kelpie of the stream to drink out of. Mary looked down into the water and saw her own face looking up and laughing at her. She took off her shoes and stockings and dabbled her feet in the stream that came and caressed them. How cool were its kisses! Pebbles, red, green, blue, formed its bed; it was more beautiful than the loveliest cradle, fit for a baby prince. Little fishes swam merrily by, darting from one stone to another. How bright were their scales! A dragon-fly shot past, his body was like a living emerald set in gauze. Now and then there rose such a queer insect to the surface, with a sort of snout. It looked so clumsy Mary could not but think of the hippopotamus at

the Zoological Gardens. "I think it's an insect hippopotamus," she said to herself. On the sloping banks were ofts, with big heads and small sharp bodies, looking like tiny crocodiles. Then what funny flies there were lying on the water! They were always darting, giving each other a sly shove, and darting off again, making the oddest zigzags she ever saw, as if they were writing on the water. The fishes jumped half-way out to catch them and other flies, and plunged back again with a fresh clear noise, and the circles they made spread wider and wider, and brighter and brighter, till they reached Mary's feet.

Amongst the rushes a toad was croaking comfortably. "Croak, croak! how nice the mud feels at sunset," it said. A spider was making his web; how deftly he swung himself back, pulled with his legs the gossamer thread from his body, knotted it, and worked it, in and out! How light and dainty was the web! it looked like a veil for some fairy bride. A water-rat eyed Mary from under the rushes, and she did not stir lest he should dart away.

"No, no, I'll not hurt them," softly answered little Mary, and she stole away.

She dabbled her feet in the brook, and watched the birds that came to drink and splattered the water with their wings all over themselves, and the fishes darting up to catch the flies.

"I've lost my boat, the stream has carried

it off ever so far away," said Willy coming up.

"I'm so sorry. Will Uncle Hugh make you another?" answered Mary.

"If he does not the fairies will," said Willy contentedly; "and now let us eat our supper."

He took the bread and cake from his pocket, and the children gathered blackberries that hung in black clusters all around them. How hungrily they ate, and how good the bread, the cake, and the blackberries tasted! They drank water in the hollow of their hands. Never had they had so good a meal! The fishes sprang up and caught the crumbs they let fall in the water, the birds hopped about and fed from them also, the water-rat darted upon a morsel Mary threw him.

Willy felt so comfortable sitting on his rock after supper that he began to whistle, for Uncle Hugh had taught him to whistle very nicely. The water foamed around him, and all the time he kept a sharp look-out lest a fairy fish should ~~poor~~

"Ten little nigger boys going out to dine,
One choked his little self, then there were nine,"

whistled Willy; and Mary felt so happy amongst the birds and by that gladsome stream, with the big trees overhead, that she sang the words to Willy's whistle. Presently one green lizard crept on the stone that Willy was sitting on, and then

another and another. How quiet they remained, as if they were listening with all their bright long bodies to the children's music.

"Hush! don't interrupt, they like it," said Willy, as Mary called to him to look at the lizards.

He went on whistling all the tunes he knew. "John Brown goes marching along," "The frog that would a wooing go, whether his mother would let him or no," and some others. He whistled them softly, and the gleaming green lizards crept closer and closer as if they would nestle up to his heart.

As Willy whistled and Mary watched the listening lizards a wonderful light suddenly shone in the sky. It touched the heather, and it flushed like a sea of roses; the trunks of the pines glowed red. With the passage of the light a silence came over the forest. The birds grew still. The brook seemed to stop singing. The trees appeared to hold their breath. It was as if all felt an unseen presence.

"Is it the fairies?" whispered Mary beginning to tremble.

Willy had stopped whistling, he was standing up straight, looking very pale.

"I think it's God walking in the wood," he said.

Mary came closer. Yes, the great forest was God's garden. Perhaps He was come to bless

the birds and the flowers and all the helpless things that could not exist without His care.

Mary strained her eyes but she only saw the wonderful light passing over the sky and earth. The distant pines caught it up, the far-away heather began to glow—then the light faded and left the twilight. Then a shiver passed over the forest trees. The birds and the brook began to sing so softly Mary felt sure they were saying their prayers, and repeated "Our Father" with them.

"I wish we had seen God. Perhaps He would have taken us to Fairyland, or commanded the fairies to come here to fetch us," said Mary.

"But perhaps He would not like us to leave home without saying good-bye to mamma and all of them," said Willy uncomfortably.

Mary looked up full of wonder. "But they would not have let us come if we had asked them," she said.

"Mamma may be frightened and make herself ill," said Willy.

Mary's eyes grew bright with tears. She had never thought of that. She had only thought of finding the fairies.

"Oh, let us go home to mamma," she sobbed.

"Don't cry, Polly," said Willy, putting his arm round her. "We'll send a fairy directly they appear to-night to tell her we're all safe, and to ask them all to come. You see, we could not

get home until the fairies come, for I don't quite know the way; but the fairies will soon come."

Mary put her head down on Willy's shoulder. She was crying, thinking of her dear mamma's anxiety and grief. Her only hope was in the fairies coming soon; but it seemed so long before they would come, so long before they could send one home, for the moon must rise before the elves would rise also.

Perhaps some kind fairy took pity on little Mary and touched her eyelids so that they grew heavy—or the sound of the water was like a lullaby, for soon she dropped to sleep, and Willy fell asleep too.

If you had seen them you would have thought they were the babes in the wood sleeping under the trees, locked in each other's arms. The birds sang above them. The wild-wood animals came shyly close to them. Once a tall deer with a crested head, that came to the brook to drink, started back at sight of the little maid and boy, but they lay so still that he also came nearer and looked at them kindly.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GYPSIES AND THE BIG BLACK DOG.

"A friend to dogs, for they are honest creatures."—*Rome.*



"O-HO-HO!" This was the cry that awoke Mary. She sat up with a start, rubbed her eyes, once, twice, three times. Where was she?

All the stars were looking at her over the tops of the trees. The full moon was up in the sky shining like a big plate of gold. The forest was bathed in white light. How still were the trees! The trunks of the beeches and ashes were gleaming like wands of ivory. The foliage of the pine-trees was gray, and the ferns were like silver. The face of every little flower and bough looked pale, but very bright in the moonlight. The brook shone, but its song was sadder than in the day; it threw its foam aloft, as if it were trying to reach the fair full moon. The willows looked like queer ghosts with long arms, and there were thin white mists creeping on every side. How strange it seemed! It was as if some elf in play had frosted the world all over with a thin delicate crust of moon silver, that is purer and whiter than earth silver, and the moon and stars were looking on what had been done.

But the forest world was not asleep. The squirrels were in full frolic. Their merry piercing cries rang on every side as they gamboled up in the trees and down on the ground.

"Ho, ho! ho, ho, ho!" observed some creature at Mary's very elbow. She started; there from the hollow of an old tree, she saw a pair of yellow eyes steadily gazing at her. Under the yellow eyes, she could see a horny beak, and a body covered with brown-gray feathers. "It's an owl!" thought Mary, who had seen the picture of one in Cock Robin's funeral, and she felt rather frightened.

The owl stared at her. An owlet flew past, not straight along, but sideways, like a cloudlet against the moon; its wings made no noise. The night-birds were not shy of her, it was she who felt frightened at them.

Willy was fast asleep, with the moonlight on his face. It was not only the deer, the squirrels, and the night-birds that were awake, but shadows were running over the ground, climbing up the trunks of the trees, creeping, nodding shadows. They looked liked elves to Mary.

"Oh, Willy, up, up, wake!" she cried, shaking his arm. "The fairies are coming, I am sure!"

Will rubbed his eyes as Mary had done, once, twice, three times. "Hullo! where are we?" he cried, sitting up very straight. "Oh how cold it is!"

"You know, Willy, the fairies. We've come to look for them by the river. I'm sure they're coming now. Look at that big owl!" and Mary clung to Willy, for she did not like to feel the night-bird's steady gaze on her.

"Ho, ho! ho, ho, ho!" shouted brown owl from his hollow tree.

"Hu, hu, hu, hu!" moaned the owlet, flying sideways silently past them.

The foam splashed, the merry squirrels played, the shadows crept about, and over all the beautiful moon shone tranquilly, and the stars twinkled.

"Yes, they're coming. Let us remain quiet. I know they'll dance there, close to that old tree," said Willy.

Then they remained very quiet, holding fast to each other, looking to where the moonlight shone brightest, just behind the old oak with weird arms stretched out, in whose hollow trunk brown owl stood.

Once the children started, for a dark form began to dance up and down, but it was only the shadow of a branch moved by the squirrels at play.

"There they are!" Willy said in a loud whisper, starting to his feet. "There!" and he pointed some way down the stream.

Yes, there were the fairies! Mary could not see them, but she saw a great red light shining behind some rocks. The trees close to it were

green as in the daylight. The brook near it was like gold. Never had she beheld anything more radiant than this fairy-light. Shadowy figures were moving about it.

"Let us go to them," said Willy.

Mary's heart began to beat, and she held fast by Willy's hand. "Oh, if they are angry with us, what shall we do?" she whispered.

"They'll not be angry, they'll have to do as I order them," replied Willy.

Then the children crept closer and closer, keeping under the trees, the owls and the squirrels looking at them. Presently they heard laughter and the chatter of voices.

"I did not know the fairies talked," said Mary.

"They do talk. How could they understand my orders if they did not talk?" replied Willy.

"That's true," said Mary; "and you'll send a fairy to mamma to-night."

"I'll send one at once," answered Willy creeping up behind a tree.

Here suddenly the children stopped.

A few yards off, round a wood-fire that crackled and sparkled, over which an iron pot hung, were seated men, women, boys, and girls. They were all very dark, and had glittering black eyes. Their clothes were ragged. Some of them had bare legs and arms, others wore tawdry gowns and bright bits of ribbon. Some of the young ones were very handsome, with white teeth and

rippling hair. The young folk lolled on the grass, chattering like magpies, eating fruit, and laughing loudly. The elder ones were more silent, and some of the women, as well as the men, smoked pipes; many of them had an ugly angry expression on their sallow faces. The mothers wore a linen bag slung on their backs, in which they carried their babies. Some of the little ones were fast asleep, but others looked with bright black eyes around them.

There they all sat on the grass, round the fire, that rose in great red and yellow flames, lighting up the pine-trees, the willows near the river, and shining on all the dark people round it. A little way off were carts with brass handles to the doors, and some horses were straying about grazing.

"Oh! Willy, they don't look like fairies," whispered Mary, trembling. "They have such brown faces, and such ragged clothes."

"They're not fairies. I think they are witches," whispered Willy very low, for he too felt afraid.

"They've got babies—such pretty babies!" said Mary, who did not know what witches meant.

"Don't talk, don't stir! they'll kill us, they'll put us in their caldron if they see us!" whispered Willy.

Mary had never heard of witches, but now she knew from what Willy said that they were very wicked and cruel. She remained very quiet, almost afraid to breathe, clinging to Willy, and

hoping with all her might that the fairies would soon come and deliver them from the witches.

All the time the dark people were chattering and smoking. The young ones looked as merry and innocent as the wild-wood animals. Some of the older ones looked peaceable, but others muttered angrily as they smoked. At last one of the women got up, and, having lifted the lid and looked inside the pot, called to the others, who all rose and came near the fire eagerly. From under the shawl of one of them there dropped a pack of greasy cards.

"They're gypsies!" whispered Willy suddenly, looking paler than he had ever done in his life before.

Mary knew what gypsies meant. Nurse had often told her stories of gypsies, who stole little children and carried them far far away from their homes, and no one heard of them any more. She had told her never to run away out of sight for in the deep wood she might come on the gypsies, who would kidnap her and carry her far away from her mamma, who would never see her little girl again. All the terrible stories Nurse had told her Mary remembered now, and here they were close to the gypsies. Her heart beat so quick with fright she could scarcely hold herself, she clung to Willy, who was breathing very hard, and whose eyes were very wide open, as he looked at the gypsies.

"Look here, Polly," he whispered, "they're not looking towards us. They're going to eat their supper. We'll go softly behind the trees, and when we're out of hearing we'll run."

The children began to walk on tiptoe. At every noise and creak they trembled. Once Mary stumbled, and she very nearly screamed out loud with terror, for she felt sure the gypsies had heard her fall, and were coming to take them. But the gypsies were chattering and laughing too loud to hear.

"Ho, ho! ho, ho, ho!" said the owl.

"Hu, hu, hu, hu, hu!" moaned the owl.

The squirrels played merrily. The children crept on—crept on so softly in the moonlight.

What a fearful time it was! At last they got to where they could only faintly hear the gypsies' voices, then they took to their little heels, and scampered off faster even than when they ran from the black crawling snake.

They ran until their small legs bent under them, unable to carry them any farther, then they fell at the foot of a great tree, and the tree put out its branches as if it would hold them and guard them.

The squirrels played so happily. The owls hooted. The moonbeams fell gently over the forest, showing nothing but trees and ferns and sleeping heather stretching on every side. There was no path anywhere. The children were lost,

like the babes in the wood. At first Mary and Willy only thought of the gypsies who stole children and carried them far away. They were so tired after running, and so frightened still, that they did not speak, but crouched close to each other.

To both of them there came thoughts of their cosy nursery, of baby sleeping in her cot, of Nurse who scolded them but who was so kind, of mamma who loved them so much, of Uncle Hugh who told them such funny stories and carved out boats for them, of papa who gave them such rides on his back. Now they wished they had never left that pleasant home. How happy they had been, happier than they would be in Fairyland.

"Poll, I do not think there are fairies," whispered Willy at last. "Mamma was right. They're the flowers and the squirrels."

"Do you think we'll ever get home to mamma?" said Mary, who was not thinking of the fairies.

"I don't know," said Willy with a faltering voice. "To-morrow when it's day, I'll find the path that leads to the entrance of the wood. I know it."

"But, Willy, the babes in the wood died the first night they were lost," whispered Mary.

"What ought we to do?" said Willy, moving closer to her.

"Perhaps if we said our prayers, God would

come again into the wood, and take us home to mamma," said Mary.

Then the two children joined their hands and knelt down and repeated "Our Father" with all their hearts; and as they said their prayers they did not feel so lonely or frightened. Mary thought she saw hovering over them the plaster angel that was between their beds at home, but, instead of being of plaster, it was a living angel, with white wings and a bright tender face. As the children prayed they heard in the deep forest a noise. It was a bark—first an anxious inquiring bark, then a loud clear bark, a happy triumphant bark—"Bow, wow, wow!" Oh how the squirrels scampered away, and the owls ruffled their feathers!

"Ho, ho! ho, ho, ho! who's that?" they said, "who's that intruder who dares to come into our kingdom?" But Mary and Willy did not mind the owls. They were up on their feet in a minute. "Bow, wow, wow!" They knew the bark, before they saw Carlo's black head and his hanging red tongue, running towards them in the moonlight. How Carlo jumped, wagged his tail, licked Willy then Mary, then Willy then Mary again, almost tumbling them down. Was there ever such a dog for saying, as plain as dog could say it, "Hurrah! it's all right, we've found them at last!"

The children tried to put their arms round

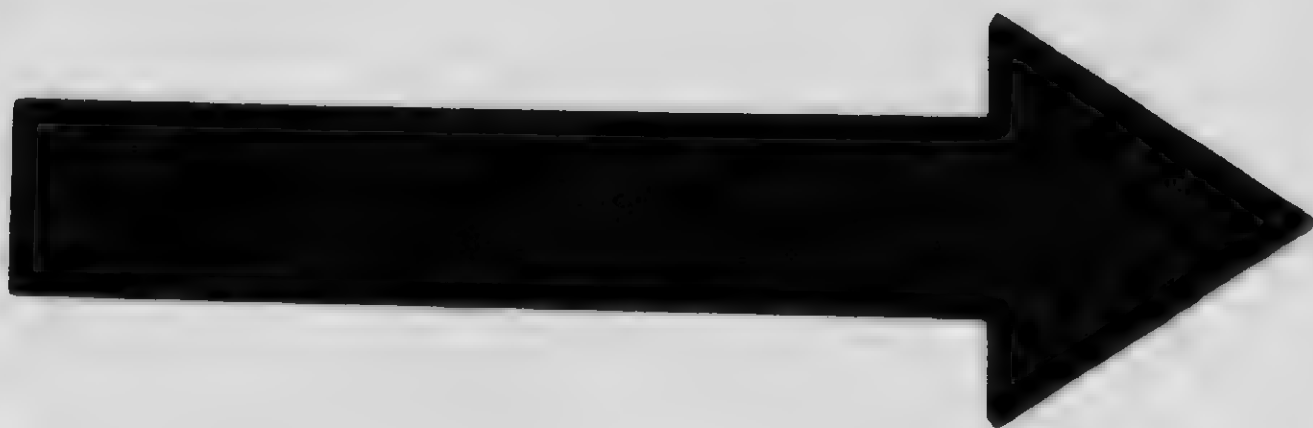
Carlo's neck and hug him, but he had something more to do, and he jumped away from them, barking, running a few steps forward, running back again, flapping his tail till you would have thought he would have wagged it right off.

"Bow, wow, here they are!" This is what he said a few paces off, very clearly.

"Bow, wow! Catch me letting them out of my sight again!" This is what he said, coming back, jumping around and licking the children, and he said it so loud all the forest heard him. Then some one cried, "Where, where? Yes, here they are!" and the children saw lights coming towards them, and then papa, Uncle Hugh, and the gardener.

Oh! how they ran towards them. Papa caught up his little girl in his arms without saying a word. Uncle Hugh tried to laugh when he hoisted Willy up on his back saying, "You young rascal, you've played us a pretty trick, you have," but his voice was husky, and he could not laugh.

Then they all set off. Little Mary, folded in papa's arms, knew, by the long way they went, how far, far they had wandered. No one spoke, but Carlo made up for the silence by expressing his delight so loudly that really the owls were justified in saying, "Ho, ho! ho, ho, ho! we would fly away if this noisy creature were to come here every night."



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



1.50

1.56

1.63

1.71

1.80

1.88

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At the entrance of the wood there was a carriage, and mamma's pale face was looking out of the window; and when she saw her children she gave a cry, and running out clasped them to her heart. When Willy and Mary saw how ill she looked, as if she had suffered so much, they sobbed, "We'll never leave you again—never—never, dear, dear mamma!"

And holding tight to mamma, with her arms round them, the children drove home. They were so tired that they were almost asleep when the carriage stopped. There was Nurse at the gate. How red were her kind eyes and pinched her poor old nose with crying! "Eh! you naughty children," she began, but she could not go on for hugging them and weeping over them. But when she had tucked them up tight in their little white beds, she said with great emphasis,—

"I'll never read you a fairy tale again, that I won't—never—never!"

And now my story is finished, and all I have to add is, that never again the children left their home and their dear mamma.

WISH-DAY.



HERE is a certain day in the year which is wish-day. Perhaps I should say there is a certain hour of a certain day of a certain month in the year that is wish-hour. Children then have only to wish for something, and the fairies grant it. It is an ancient custom kept up by the fairies for the sake of the good old times when they were on earth, and had their games and revels with the little lads and lasses on it. Sometimes the fairies grant the children only what is good for them, but sometimes out of mischief they grant them their wishes, be they good or hurtful.

I cannot tell you the exact day that is wish-day, but I know it is in summer, right in the heart of summer, when all the cultivated roses are blooming in the garden, and the wild roses star the shady woods. And the hour is at sunrise. This is the reason why very few children have ever found out the secret of wish-day; for most little people have their eyes tight shut up in sleep when the sun, pushing back the clouds and leaping into the sky, drives darkness before

him as though it were a naughty child caught at mischief.

A long time ago there were three children whose names were Blanche, George, and Louisa or Loui, as she was called for a pet name. Blanche was just eight, George was six, and Loui five. They had a baby-brother too, but at the time of our story he was very ill, so ill that their mamma and nurse kept watch over him all day and night, and mamma prayed the good God not to let death carry away her baby in his

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When Nurse said good-night to the children after putting them to bed one evening, she bade them be very good, as she was not going to sleep in the nursery with them, but must watch all night by baby's cot. As soon as she had left the room, little Loui raised her head from her pillow.

"Do you know what to-morrow is?" she whispered.

"What?" said George; "why, of course to-morrow is Tuesday; everybody knows that."

"Ah! but that's not it. To-morrow is a wonderful day. To-morrow is wish-day, and we can see the fairies if we get up at sunrise, and they'll give us what we ask them."

"How do you know?" said Blanche.

"Nurse told me," answered Loui.

"Hurrah! I'll get up in time—I know what I'll

ask for," cried George, with a flourish of his heels up in the air.

"What will you ask for?" cried Blanche and Loui together.

"That's a Secret I won't tell," answered George in a voice big with mystery.

"I'll get up in time too," said Blanche; "and I know what I'll ask for, but I won't tell. It's a secret too."

"I'll ask for ten, twenty, a hundred things," cried little Loui, clapping her hands.

"You must not be a greedy little girl, or the fairies won't give you anything at all," said Blanche, who never forgot she was the eldest, and liked to lecture the others.

"We must not go to sleep all night," said George with determination. "By-and-by, when I'm sure Nurse won't come in again, I'll get up and dress myself."

"No, we must not go to sleep or we should never awake in time," agreed Blanche.

"I'll keep my fingers inside my eyes to prevent them closing," said Loui.

Then the children agreed that they would steal out of the nursery while it was still dark, and go down-stairs and sit in the great window of the hall looking towards the place where their mamma told them the sun rose every morning.

And all the time as they chatted, the baby-brother far away wailed a little helpless cry of

pain. Loui longed to get up and nurse him—she wondered if he looked pale instead of rosy and chubby. She had not seen him for three days, ever since he had fallen ill. The children tried very hard to keep awake, but after awhile deep regular breathing from George's bed told that he was sound asleep, then Blanche followed with her deep breathing, and soon after little Loui's fingers fell from her eyes, their lids closed, and the three children slept, and I am not sure that they dreamt even of the fairies and wish-day.

Suddenly Loui awoke. It was dark, all save one streak of faint light that came stealing in like the ghost of day through a slit in the curtain. How silent all was, except for Blanche's and George's deep breathing close by, and the distant moan of baby-brother. All at once she remembered it was wish-day. Down she scrambled from her cot, and jumping from George's bed to Blanche's, began tugging at their bed-clothes and thumping their noses with her fat fists.

"Awake, awake," she cried. "It's wish-day, and the fairies are coming." How Blanche and George rubbed their eyes and jumped out of bed in a minute! and then the three children in their night-gowns stole down-stairs so softly—so softly. They were in time, the sun was not yet risen, but that part of the sky he was coming to was the colour of yellow daffodils, and right in the middle shone a star like a big drop of dew. Down in the

garden, dew lay on the grass, and the children dimly saw the roses on the bushes, and the silver vapour between the trees. Now that they were come they felt a little frightened, and huddled up close to each other in the bow-window, for though they had heard a great deal of the fairies, they had never seen one yet.

All at once—how she came there, who could tell? down from the clouds, or up from the ground, through the window, or by the chimney?—there stood right before them the queerest little fairy you can imagine, with a pointed hat, a pointed nose, a pointed chin, and black eyes that twinkled.

"So you three children have come to wish—got up early—earlier than usual. Hey! hey! hey!" she said, in the voice like the chirping of a bird, and wagging her head and thumping the ground with her hand. "And what do you wish for, hey? I'll not give you sugar-plums, so don't ask for them. Come, what do you wish for?"

But what with her asking the question so many times over, and nodding as she looked at them with her funny black eyes, and remembering she was a fairy, the children could not say a word.

"Hey! hey! can't say yet?" said the fairy; "well, never mind, you may think it over till the sun rises. I can't wait, it'll be up in five minutes, and I've got to go to Sweden and Russia, to Canada and the little Laplanders, so I'm in a hurry and can't stand waiting here. Listen! you'll find

three flowers, and each may take one and wish—mind what you wish! Good-bye!" and away she went; and although they were looking at her with all their eyes, not one of the children could say how the fairy had gone—head-over-heels, or with a hop and a jump, or sailing off on a butterfly's back. She was gone—that was all they knew.

As soon as she had vanished, back came the children's wits, and they began to look about them for the three flowers, but no flowers could they find anywhere. On the old bench, however, close to the window lay something they had never seen before. It was a golden veil. They came near and it did not fade away; it lay on the dark carved wooden bench like a cobweb woven of a sunbeam. George was afraid to touch it, for it looked as if it would break or melt if breathed on; but Loui put out her hand and lifted a corner with her tiny forefinger and thumb, and then the children saw the three flowers fresh picked from fairyland with its dew upon their leaves still.

There was a rose with its petals curling closer and closer the nearer they were to its crimson heart; there was a yellow dahlia flaunting, bold and dazzling; and near it, half hidden by its leaves, was a violet.

The children gazed at the wonderful flowers that shone under the golden veil. Would they guess the secret between them and the fairies, I should like to know?

"That's a jolly dahlia," said George, with his head a little on one side, not however putting out his hand till he had given the matter more thought.

"But it has got no smell," said little Loui.

"What's the good of flowers smelling?" replied George grandly. He always spoke in a superior way to his sisters. "I like dahlias—they hold up their heads and make a show. They don't go skulking under their leaves like the violet, as if they were ashamed of themselves, and they are better than roses—they've got no thorns. You don't want to prick your hands when you go to pluck them."

"That's because you are clumsy, and don't look where you put your fingers," said Blanche. "I never prick my fingers, because I look where I put them. Roses are the prettiest flowers of all; everybody stops to look at them and smell them, and children are not allowed to pluck them without permission."

"I like the violet best," said Loui. "Violets grow in the woods, and little children can pick them."

"Let's choose," said George in a rousing tone; "girls are such slow coaches. The sun will be up in a minute. I'm the boy, so I choose first."

"But I'm the eldest," said Blanche, tossing her head up very high. "I must wish first. I take the rose, and I wish to be the prettiest girl in all the town, and to have beautiful dresses with long trains to them, like Cinderella at the ball."

"Pooh, what a silly wish!" cried George. "It's my turn now, and I choose the dahlia, and I wish to ride papa's black horse that kicks and rears when anyone but papa mounts him."

"I wish baby-brother to get quite well," said Loui, taking up the violet.

That instant a sunbeam passed through the window and touched Loui. It lay on her head and rested there just a minute, like a radiant hand upon it. In the twinkle of an eye all vanished—the golden veil from the bench, the rose out of Blanche's hand, the dahlia out of George's, the violet out of Loui's—all were gone. The sun had risen, and wish-hour was over.

Then the children stole back to the nursery. They told no one what had happened, but during breakfast and lessons they thought of nothing else. They were bid to keep very quiet, for baby-brother had fallen asleep, and his little restless moan was no longer heard through the house.

After breakfast George went down to the stable to have a look at Blackberry, papa's black horse. How splendid he looked with his fiery eyes and well-cut legs! Every noise made him toss his head and prick up his ears. How grand it would be to sit astride him and master him, as papa did, and then trot past the little boys and girls in the town! George looked at his Shetland pony in a paddock close by, and thought it no better than riding a dog to ride such a mild brute as that!

"Have a ride, Master George?" asked the stable-boy.

"Yes, I should like a ride. If you saddle Blackberry and lift me up on him, I'll give you sixpence," said George in an off-hand way.

"Can't, Master George; why he'd toss you off as soon as look at you," replied the boy.

"He won't toss me off; I won't let him. I'll hold on by my knees," said George, with a confident little swagger. "Put me up, and I'll give you my whistle as well as sixpence."

I don't know whether it was the promise of the sixpence and the whistle or because the fairies wished it, but the stable-boy saddled Blackberry and put George upon his back.

Yes, it was grand to be perched up so high, although George did not like the big black head and mane tossing so near him; and as the stable-boy led Blackberry out, he felt his step was very different from the shaggy Shetland's jog trot.

"Lead him into the road," said George, who hoped Blanche and Loui might be looking out of a top window. He would have liked all the world to be looking at him just then.

The stable-boy obeyed, and walking by Blackberry's side, led him up the road for about a mile—and so George was having his wish. The little children, as he passed, gazed open-mouthed at him; he felt all the importance of his position, and was getting used to Blackberry's tossing

head and dancing step. "Let go the reins," he said to the stable-boy. "I'll ride alone now."

"No, no, Master George; better not," said the boy.

"But you must let go; I want to have a real ride," George said in a masterful tone.

The boy dropped the bridle, and George moved on alone. It was a splendid moment. Very soon, however, Blackberry changed his pace, and his amble became a trot. Suddenly he whisked his tail and lowered his head.

"Look out, Master George; pull in the reins," cried the boy from behind.

George pulled as hard as he could tug, but Blackberry's head only went the lower. Perhaps he felt indignant that such a sprat of a creature as George should not only dare to sit astride him but actually think to master him, for he whisked and lashed his tail and reared his huge body on his hind feet as if to shake George off. George let go the bridle, and clutching Blackberry's mane clung to it with all his might. He dizzily saw the boy striving to seize the bridle, but it was too late. Blackberry turned, and was now dashing off in a mad gallop back to his stable.

Tramp, tramp, gallop, gallop, the road seemed to fly beneath his hoofs. Houses, trees, fields flashed past. George heard the shout of people as he tore along, but it grew faint before it reached him. Gallop, gallop, tramp, tramp. Faster than the wind he was riding. He was trembling

in every limb, but still clinging to Blackberry's mane. Would he ever stop? Would he shake him off and trample on him? Gallop, gallop, tramp, tramp. A plunge, and then a splash—Blackberry had thrown George into a pond by the roadside, all slimy with duckweed, among the ducks and geese. What a quack, quack, and wild flapping of wings there was! One fat duck on which George had plumed down wriggled off with a scream.

The farm-labourers who were close at hand picked him out, but what a piteous figure he presented, with the duckweed clinging to his clothes and hair, and his teeth chattering and his limbs trembling from the horror of that hurry-skurrying ride.

"Poor mannikin!" he heard some one say, "he's no more fit than a sucking babe to ride that great creature of a horse. It was a shame for whoever stuck a mite like him upon it."

"Most like," said some one else, "he got the groom to put him on. Small boys have uncommon big ideas about themselves, and like to do like grown-up folk."

George was carried home by the farmer to whom the field belonged. When Nurse saw him, she flung up her hands—"Did you ever see the likes!" she cried. "What will his mamma say when she hears it? Ah, Master George, if you didn't look the most comical figure I ever clapped eyes on! I could cry thinking of the fright you've

had, and give you a whipping for your disobedience. So you'll just go to bed instead, and stop there, to keep off the cold, and as a punishment."

So George went to bed. He was so sore and tired that he soon fell asleep, and perhaps he dreamt what a silly secret the flaunting yellow dahlia held in its petals—the secret of empty ambition.

And now let us see what happened to Blanche.

That afternoon some ladies came to inquire after baby-brother, who was still sleeping peacefully, making no moan. They had a little girl with them, and when Blanche came into the drawing-room the ladies kissed her and began to praise her beauty.

"What a lovely little creature!" they said, looking at her. "What beautiful blue eyes and golden hair, and a complexion like flowers! She is the prettiest little girl in all the town."

And the child who was with them put out her hand and touched Blanche's cheek and said, "How pretty you are!"

When Blanche heard all this she was very proud—"The prettiest little girl in all the town." She had her wish—the fairies had granted it.

As soon as she was alone she got up on tiptoe to look at herself in the glass. Yes, she was very pretty; what blue eyes she had, and so bright! She opened them wide to see them better, and she turned her head about and laughed with glee. She could not play, for the thought of her beauty

kept coming and disturbing her, and she would run away to look at herself in the glass again. "Do you not think me very pretty?" she asked Loui in a whisper, and looking much pleased with herself.

"Just as you were always," replied Loui; "I wish you would come and play ball with me."

"I don't want to play," said Blanche crossly; and then she went back to look at herself in the glass. The servants disturbed her, coming and going, and she was called away. She grew vexed, for all she cared to do was to look at her pretty image in the mirror, and this she could not do in peace.

At last she bethought herself of her mamma's dressing-room. No one would look for her there, for it was close to the room where baby was sleeping, and the children had been told not to go upstairs lest they should disturb their little sick brother's slumbers. There were laces and jewels of mamma's in the dressing-room. Would she not look like Cinderella at the ball if she could only deck herself out in gauze and diamonds!

Up stole Blanche very softly. A fire burnt in the grate for baby-brother's use, although it was midsummer. On the table lay a gold chain. Blanche wound it round her neck, and it lay there like a gleaming serpent, but it was not brighter than her hair. Mamma's bunch of keys were also on the table. Blanche knew the drawer

where the laces were kept. She put a key very gently into its hole and drew open the drawer, making no noise, and took out a long lace veil. How like a beautiful cloud it was! She threw it over her, then she mounted on a chair the better to see herself in the long mirror in its carved oak frame that stood over the chimney-piece. It was the prettiest sight you ever saw—this little damsel clad from head to foot in lace. A fairy peeping out of a cloud could not have been a daintier vision. Her blue eyes shone with delight and wonder; her mouth was half open, as she breathed a little hard, for she was excited, finding her wish for beauty fulfilled. Then, after having gazed at herself for a little while, she stooped forward to kiss that lovely image of herself in the dark looking-glass. She had forgotten the fire—the fire that had been kept in for baby-brother's sake. Her chair was close to it, and mamma's veil hung down near it. As Blanche bent forward to kiss her reflection she felt something warm, then it grew hot, then came a sound! The flames had caught the lace, and in a moment the little maid was surrounded as by a tower of flames. What a hissing, purring noise they made! She felt a horrid light round her, and a scorching pain. Down jumped Blanche shrieking, but the flames went with her. She could not escape them: there they were round her, whirring, dazzling, scorching. Suddenly a hand grasped her; something

dark and heavy was thrown over her, enveloping her from head to foot. She could see nothing, but she could hear her father's voice saying, "Hush child! stay quiet. If you don't move I'll put the fire out."

Blanche was not dangerously hurt. Her father had come in time to save her by extinguishing the flames; but her golden hair was burnt to a little black friz, and her cheeks and arms were scorched. Then she knew what a foolish wish hers had been—selfish vanity, that never brings anything but sorrow.

And little Loui? That evening she waited patiently at the foot of the stairs. The doctor had just gone up to see baby-brother. When he came down she crept out of her corner and came to him. "Is little brother better?" she asked.

"Little brother!" answered the doctor, looking at her through his gold-rimmed spectacles, "little brother will soon be able to crow and caper again. I know a little maid who will be glad of it;" and he patted Loui's head.

"I thought he would get well," said Loui; "for I asked the fairies to make him well."

"The fairies!" said the doctor, laughing. "So it's the fairies and not my physic that have made him well. To be sure last night I didn't think my physic would do him much good."

"Can I see little brother?" asked Loui.

"Yes, bring the child up," said the doctor.

So mamma brought Loui softly upstairs to the room where baby-brother was. He looked very thin and pale, but when he saw Loui he stretched out his hand and gave a feeble crow. Loui was allowed to sit near him, and even to nurse him for a little while; and as he lay in her lap, clasping her finger with his small satin hand, she whispered very low to him that this had been wish-day, and that she had seen a fairy, and she had asked the fairy to make him well. She did not tell him about the horse or about the fire, for she was sorry for George and Blanche.

I do not know if baby understood, but he laughed and chuckled, and Loui felt sure he understood.

Every day baby-brother got better, and Loui was happy. The secret of the violet that grows in the woods, and which all the children can pluck, was unselfish love, and Loui had chosen right in choosing it.

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